

TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA.

A

T R A G E D Y.

As it is ACTED at the

THEATRE-ROYAL

I N

D R U R Y - L A N E.

By His M A J E S T Y's Servants.

By JAMES THOMSON.

WITH HIS LAST

CORRECTIONS and IMPROVEMENTS.

D U B L I N:

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M.DCC.LXVII.



The PERSONS.

TANCRED, Count of <i>Lecce</i> .	Mr. Garrick.
MATTEO SIFFREDI, lord high chancellor of <i>Sicily</i> ,	Mr. Sheridan.
Earl OSMOND, lord high con- stable of <i>Sicily</i> ,	Mr. Delane.
RODOLPHO, friend to TANCRED, and captain of the guards,	Mr. Havard.
SIGISMUNDA, daughter of SIF- FREDI,	Mrs. Cibber.
LAURA, sister of RODOLPHO, and friend to SIGISMUNDA,	Miss Budgell.

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

SCENE *The City of Palermo, in Sicily.*

TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS,
F R E D E R I C K
P R I N C E of W A L E S.

SIR,

THE honour your ROYAL HIGHNESS has done me in the protection you was pleased to give to this tragedy, emboldens me to lay it now at your feet, and beg your permission to publish it under your royal patronage. The favouring and protecting of letters has been, in all ages and countries, one distinguishing mark of a great prince; and that with good reason, not only as it shews a justness of taste, and elevation of mind, but as the influence of such a protection, by exciting good writers to labour with more emulation in the improvement of their several talents, not a little contributes to the embellishment and instruction of society. But of all the different species of writing, none has such an effect upon the lives and manners of men as the dramatic; and therefore that of all
others

DEDICATION.

others most deserves the attention of princes, who, by a judicious approbation of such pieces as tend to promote all public and private virtue, may more than by any coercive methods secure the purity of the stage, and in consequence thereof greatly advance the morals and politeness of their people. How eminently **YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS** has always extended your favour and patronage to every art and science, and in a particular manner to dramatic performances, is too well known to the world for me to mention it here. Allow me only to wish, that what I have now the honour to offer to your **ROYAL HIGHNESS**, may be judged not unworthy of your protection, at least in the Sentiments which it inculcates. A warm and grateful sense of your goodness to me makes me desirous to seize every occasion of declaring in public, with what profound respect and dutiful attachment, I am,

SIR,

YOUR ROYAL HIGHNESS'S

Most obliged,

Most obedient, and

Most devoted servant,

JAMES THOMSON.



PROLOGUE.

B*OLD is the man! who, in this nicer age,
Presumes to tread the chaste corrected stage.
Now, with gay tinsel arts, we can no more
Conceal the want of nature's sterling ore.
Our spells are vanish'd, broke our magic wand,
That us'd to waft you over sea and land.
Before your light the fairy people fade,
The demons fly—The ghost itself is laid.
In vain of martial scenes the loud alarms,
The mighty prompter thundering out to arms,
The play-house posse clattering from afar,
The close-wedg'd battle, and the din of war.
Now even the senate seldom we convene;
The yawning fathers not behind the scene.
Your taste rejects the glittering false sublime,
To sigh in metaphor, and die in rhyme.
High rant is tumbled from his gallery throne;
Description, dreams---nay, similes are gone.
What shall we then? to please you how devise,
Whose judgment sits not in your ears and eyes?
Thrice happy! could we catch great Shakespear's art,
To trace the deep recesses of the heart;
His simple plain sublime, to which is given
To strike the soul with darted flames from heaven:
Could we awake soft Otway's tender woe,
The pomp of verse and golden lines of Rowe.
We to your hearts apply: let them attend;
Before their silent candid bar we bend.
If warm'd they listen, 'tis our noblest praise;
If cold, they wither all the muse's bays.*

EPILOGUE.

Spoken by Miss BUDGELL.

C*ramm'd to the Throat with wholesome moral Stuff,
Alas! poor Audience! you have had enough.
Was ever hapless Heroine of a Play
In such a piteous Plight as ours To-day?*

Was

E P I L O G U E.

*Was ever Woman so by Love betray'd?
Match'd with two Husbands, and yet—die a Maid,
But blefs me!—bold—What Sounds are these I hear!—
I see the TRAGIC MUSE herself appear.*

The Back Scene opens, and discovers a romantic
Silvan Landskip; from which Mrs. CIBBER, in
the Character of the TRAGIC MUSE, advances
slowly to Music, and speaks the following Lines.

*Hence with your flippant Epilogue, that tries
To wipe the virtuous Tear from BRITISH Eyes;
That dares my moral Tragic Scene profane,
With Strains—at best, unsuiting, light and vain.
Hence from the pure unsully'd Beams that play
In yon fair Eyes, where Virtue shines—Away!*

*BRITONS, to you from chaste Castalian Groves,
Where dw ll the tender, oft unhappy, Loves;
Where Shades of Heroes roam, each mighty Name,
And court my Aid to rise again to Fame;
To you I come, to Freedom's noblest Seat,
And in BRITANNIA fix my last Retreat.*

*In Greece and Rome, I watch'd the Publick Weal;
The purpled Tyrant trembled at my Steel:
Nor did I less o'er private sorrows reign,
And mend the melting Heart with softer Pain.
On France and You then rose my bright'ning Star,
With social Ray—The ARTS are ne'er at War.
O, as your Fire and Genius stronger blaze,
As yours are generous Freedom's bolder Lays,
Let not the Gallick Taste leave yours behind,
In decent Manners and in Life refin'd;
Banish the motley Mode, to tag low Verse,
The laughing Ballad to the mournful Hearse.
When thro' five Acts your Hearts have learnt to glow,
Touch'd with the sacred Force of honest Woe;
O keep the dear Impression on your Breast,
Nor idly lose it for a wretched Jest!*



TANCRED and SIGISMUNDA.

A

TRAGEDY.

ACT I. SCENE I.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Sigif. **A** fatal day to *Sicily*! The king
Approaches his last moments?

Laur. So 'tis fear'd.

Sigif. The death of those distinguish'd by their station,

But by their virtues more, awakes the mind
To solemn dread, and strikes a saddening awe:
Not that we grieve for them, but for ourselves,
Left to the toil of life—And yet the best
Are, by the playful children of this world,
At once forgot, as they had never been.

Laura, 'tis said—the heart is sometimes charg'd
With a prophetic sadness: such, methinks,
Now hangs on mine. The king's approaching death
Suggests a thousand fears. What troubles thence
May throw the state once more into confusion,
What sudden changes in my father's house
May rise, and part me from my dearest *Tancred*,
Alarms my thought.

Laur. The fears of love-sick fancy!
Perversely busy to torment itself.
But be assur'd your father's steady friendship,
Join'd to a certain genius, that commands,
Not kneels to fortune, will support and cherish,
Here in the public eye of *Sicily*,
This—I may call him—his adopted son,

The

The noble *Tancred*, form'd to all his virtues.

Sigif. Ah form'd to charm his daughter!—This fair
Has tempted far the chace. Is he not yet [morn
Return'd?

Laur. No.—When your father to the king,
Who now expiring lyes, was call'd in haste,
He sent each way his messengers to find him;
With such a look of ardor and impatience,
As if this near event was to count *Tancred*
Of more importance than I comprehend.

Sigif. There lyes, my *Laura*, o'er my *Tancred's* birth
A cloud I cannot pierce. With princely accost,
Nay, with respect, which oft I have observ'd,
Stealing at times submissive o'er his features,
In *Belmont's* woods my father rear'd this youth—
Ah woods! where first my artless bosom learn'd
The sighs of love.—He gives him out the son
Of an old friend, a baron of *Apulia*,
Who in the late crusado bravely fell.
But then 'tis strange; is all his family,
As well as father, dead? and all their friends,
Except my sire, the generous good *Siffredi*?
Had he a mother, sister, brother left,
The last remain of kindred; with what pride,
What rapture, might they fly o'er earth and sea,
To claim this rising honour of their blood!
This bright unknown! this all-accomplish'd youth!
Who charms—too much—the heart of *Sigismunda*!

Laura, perhaps your brother knows him better,
The friend and partner of his freest hours.
What says *Rodolpho*? Does he truly credit
This story of his birth?

Laur. He has sometimes,
Like you, his doubts; yet, when maturely weigh'd,
Believes it true. As for lord *Tancred's* self,
He never entertain'd the slightest thought
That verg'd to doubt; but oft laments his state,
By cruel fortune so ill pair'd to yours.

Sigif. Merit like his, the fortune of the mind,
Beggars all wealth—Then to your brother, *Laura*,
He talks of me?

Laur.



Laur. Of nothing else. Howe'er
The talk begin, it ends with *Sigismunda*.
Their morning, noontide, and their evening walks
Are full of you; and all the woods of *Belmont*
Enamour'd with your name—

Sigif. Away, my friend;
You flatter—yet the dear delusion charms.

Laur. No, *Sigismunda*, 'tis the strictest truth,
Nor half the truth, I tell you. Even with fondness,
My brother talks for ever of the passion
That fires young *Tancred's* breast. So much it strikes
He praises love as if he were a lover. [him,
He blames the false pursuits of vagrant youth,
Calls them gay folly, a mistaken struggle
Against best-judging nature. Heaven, he says,
In lavish bounty form'd the heart for love;
In love included all the finer seeds
Of honour, virtue, friendship, purest bliss—

Sigif. Virtuous *Rodolpho*!

Laur. Then his pleasing theme
He varies to the praises of your lover—

Sigif. And what, my *Laura*, says he on the subject?

Laur. He says that, tho' he were not nobly born,
Nature has form'd him noble, generous, brave,
Truly magnanimous, and warmly scorning
Whatever bears the smallest taint of baseness.
That every easy virtue is his own;
Not learnt by painful labour, but inspir'd,
Implanted in his soul—Chiefly one charm
He in his graceful character observes;
That though his passions burn with high impatience,
And sometimes, from a noble heat of nature,
Are ready to fly off; yet the least check
Of ruling reason brings them back to temper,
And gentle softness.

Sigif. True! O true, *Rodolpho*!
Blest be thy kindred worth for loving his!
He is all warmth, all amiable fire,
All quick heroic ardor! temper'd soft
With gentleness of heart, and manly reason!
If virtue were to wear a human form,

To light it with her dignity and flame,
 Then soft'ning mix her smiles and tender graces;
 O she would chuse the person of my *Tancred*!
 Go on, my friend, go on, and ever praise him;
 The subject knows no bounds, nor can I tire,
 While my breast trembles to that sweetest music!
 The heart of woman tastes no truer joy,
 Is never flatter'd with such dear enchantment—
 'Tis more than selfish vanity—as when
 She hears the praises of the man she loves——
Laur. Madam, your father comes.

S C E N E I I.

SIFFREDI, SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Siff. [*To an attendant as he enters.*] Lord *Tancred*
 Is found? [then]

Att. My lord, he quickly will be here.
 I scarce could keep before him, tho' he bid me
 Speed on, to say he would attend your orders.

Siff. 'Tis well—retire—You, too, my daughter,
 leave me.

Sigisf. I go, my father—But how fares the king?

Siff. He is no more. Gone to that awful state,
 Where kings the crown wear only of their virtues.

Sigisf. How bright must then be his!—This stroke is
 sudden.

He was this morning well, when to the chace
 Lord *Tancred* went

Siff. 'Tis true. But at his years
 Death gives short notice—Drooping nature then,
 Without a gust of pain to shake it, falls.
 His death, my daughter, was that happy period
 Which few attain. The duties of his day
 Were all discharg'd, and gratefully enjoy'd
 Its noblest blessings; calm, as evening skies,
 Was his pure mind, and lighted up with hopes
 That open heaven; when, for his last long sleep
 Timely prepar'd, a lassitude of life,
 A pleasing weariness of mortal joy,
 Fell on his soul, and down he sunk to rest.
 O may my death be such!—He but one wish

Left

SIGISMUNDA.

11

Left unfulfill'd, which was to see count *Tancred*—

Sigif. To see count *Tancred*!—Pardon me, my lord—

Siff. For what, my daughter?—But, with such emotion,

Why did you start at mention of count *Tancred*?

Sigif. Nothing—I only hoped the dying king Might mean to make some generous just provision For this your worthy charge, this noble orphan.

Siff. And he has done it largely—Leave me now—I want some private conference with lord *Tancred*.

S C E N E III.

SIFFREDI alone.

My doubts are but too true—If these old eyes
Can trace the marks of love, a mutual passion
Has seiz'd, I fear, my daughter and this prince,
My sovereign now—Should it be so? Ah there,
There lurks a brooding tempest, that may shake
My long concerted scheme, to settle firm
The public peace and welfare, which the king
Has made the prudent basis of his will—
Away! unworthy views! you shall not tempt me!
Nor interest, nor ambition shall seduce
My fixt resolve—perish the selfish thought,
Which our own good prefers to that of millions!—
He comes—my king—unconscious of his fortune.

S C E N E IV.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI.

Tanc. My lord *Siffredi*, in your looks I read,
Confirm'd, the mournful news that fly abroad
From tongue to tongue—We then, at last, have lost
The good old king?

Siff. Yes, we have lost a father!
The greatest blessing heaven bestows on mortals,
And seldom found amidst these wilds of time.
A good, a worthy king!—Hear me, my *Tancred*,
And I will tell thee, in a few plain words,
How he deserv'd that best, that glorious title.
'Tis nought complex, 'tis clear as truth and virtue.

He

He lov'd his people, deem'd them all his children ;
 The good exalted, and depress'd the bad.
 He spurn'd the flattering crew, with scorn rejected
 Their smooth advice that only means themselves,
 Their schemes to aggrandize him into baseness :
 Nor did he less disdain the secret breath,
 The whisper'd tale, that blights a virtuous name.
 He fought alone the good of those for whom
 He was entrusted with the sovereign power :
 Well knowing that a people, in their rights
 And industry protected, living safe
 Beneath the sacred shelter of the laws,
 Encourag'd in their genius, arts, and labours,
 And happy each as he himself deserves,
 Are ne'er ungrateful. With unsparing hand
 They will for him provide : their filial love
 And confidence are his unfailing treasure,
 And every honest man his faithful guard.

Tanc. A general face of grief o'erspreads the city.
 I mark'd the people, as I hither came,
 In crouds assembled, struck with silent sorrow,
 And pouring forth the noblest praise of tears.
 Those, whom remembrance of their former woes,
 And long experience of the vain illusions
 Of youthful hope, had into wise consent
 And fear of change corrected, wrung their hands,
 And often casting up their eyes to heaven,
 Gave sign of sad conjecture. Others shew'd,
 Athwart their grief, or real or affected,
 A gleam of expectation, from what chance
 And change might bring. A mingled murmur run
 Along the streets ; and, from the lonely court
 Of him who can no more assist their fortunes,
 I saw the courtier-fry, with eager haste,
 All hurrying to *Constantia*.

Siff. Noble youth !
 I joy to hear from thee these just reflections,
 Worthy of riper years—But if they seek
Constantia, trust me, they mistake their course.

Tanc. How ! Is she not, my lord, the late king's sister,
 Heir to the crown of *Sicily* ? the last
 Of our fam'd *Norman* line, and now our queen ?

Siff.

Siff. *Tancred*, 'tis true; she is the late king's sister,
The sole surviving offspring of that tyrant
William the bad—so for his vices stiled;
Who spilt much noble blood, and sore oppress'd
Th' exhausted land: whence grievous war arose,
And many a dire convulsion shook the state.
When he, whose death *Sicilia* mourns to-day,
William, who had and well deserv'd the name
Of *Good*, succeeding to his father's throne,
Reliev'd his country's woes—But to return—
She is the late king's sister, born some months
After the tyrant's death, but not next heir.

Tanc. You much surprise me—May I then presume
To ask who is?

Siff. Come nearer, noble *Tancred*,
Son of my care! I must, on this occasion,
Consult thy generous heart; which, when conducted
By rectitude of mind and honest virtues,
Gives better counsel than the hoary head—
Then know, there lives a prince, here in *Palermo*,
The lineal offspring of our famous hero,
Roger the first.

Tanc. Great heaven!—How far remov'd
From that our mighty founder?

Siff. His great grandson:
Sprung from his eldest son, who died untimely,
Before his father.

Tanc. Ha! the prince you mean
Is he not *Manfred's* son? The generous, brave,
Unhappy *Manfred*! whom the tyrant *William*,
You just now mention'd, not content to spoil
Of his paternal crown, threw into fetters,
And infamously murder'd.

Siff. Yes—the same.

Tanc. By heavens! I joy to find our *Norman* reign,
The world's sole light amidst these barbarous ages!
Yet rears its head; and shall not, from the lance,
Pass to the feeble distaff—But this prince
Where has he lain conceal'd?

Siff. The late good king,
By noble pity mov'd, contriv'd to save him
From his dire father's unrelenting rage;

And

And had him rear'd in private, as became
 His birth and hopes, with high and princely nurture.
 Till now, too young to rule a troubled state,
 By civil broils most miserably torn,
 He in his safe retreat has lain conceal'd,
 His birth and fortune to himself unknown;
 But when the dying king to me entrusted,
 As to the chancellor of the realm, his will,
 His successor he named him.

Tanc. Happy youth!

He then will triumph o'er his father's foes,
 O'er haughty *Osmond*, and the tyrant's daughter.

Siff. Ay, that is what I dread—that heat of youth;
 There lurks, I fear, perdition to the state;
 I dread the horrors of rekindled war:
 Tho' dead, the tyrant still is to be fear'd;
 His daughter's party still is strong, and numerous:
 Her friend, earl *Osmond*, constable of *Sicily*,
 Experienc'd, brave, high-born, of mighty interest.
 Better the prince and princess should by marriage
 Unite their friends, their interest and their claims;
 Then will the peace and welfare of the land
 On a firm basis rise.

Tanc. My lord *Siffredi*,
 If by myself I of this prince may judge,
 That scheme will scarce succeed—Your prudent age
 In vain will counsel, if the heart forbid it—
 But wherefore fear? The right is clearly his;
 And, under your direction, with each man
 Of worth, and steadfast loyalty, to back
 At once the king's appointment and his birthright,
 There is no ground for fear. They have great odds,
 Against th' astonish'd sons of violence,
 Who fight with awful justice on their side.
 All *Sicily* will rouse, all faithful hearts
 Will range themselves around prince *Manfred's* son.
 For me, I here devote me to the service
 Of this young prince; I every drop of blood
 Will lose with joy, with transport in his cause—
 Pardon my warmth—but that, my lord, will never
 To this decision come—Then find the prince;
 Lose not a moment to awaken in him

The

The royal soul. Perhaps he now desponding
Pines in a corner, and laments his fortune;
That in the narrower bounds of private life
He must confine his aims, those swelling virtues
Which from his noble father he inherits.

Siff. Perhaps, regardless, in the common bane
Of youth he melts in vanity and love.
But if the seeds of virtue glow within him,
I will awake a higher sense, a love
That grasps the loves and happiness of millions.

Tanc. Why that surmise? Or should he love, *Siffredi*,
I doubt not, it is nobly, which will raise
And animate his virtues—O permit me,
To plead the cause of youth—Their virtue oft,
In pleasure's soft enchantment lull'd a while,
Forgets itself; it sleeps and gayly dreams,
Till great occasion rouse it: then all flame,
It walks abroad, with heighten'd soul and vigor,
And by the change astonishes the world.
Even with a kind of sympathy, I feel
The joy that waits this prince; when all the powers,
Th' expanding heart can wish, of doing good;
Whatever swells ambition, or exalts
The human soul into divine emotions,
All croud at once upon him.

Siff. Ah, my *Tancred*,
Nothing so easy as in speculation,
And at a distance seen the course of honour,
A fair delightful champain strew'd with flowers.
But when the practice comes; when our fond passions,
Pleasure, and pride, and self-indulgence, throw
Their magic dust around, the prospect roughens:
Then dreadful passes, craggy mountains rise,
Cliffs to be scal'd, and torrents to be stem'd:
Then toil ensues, and perseverance stern;
And endless combats with our grosser sense,
Oft lost, and oft renew'd; and generous pain
For others felt; and, harder lesson still!
Our honest bliss for others sacrific'd;
And all the rugged task of virtue quails
The stoutest heart of common resolution.
Few get above this turbid scene of strife,

Few

Few gain the summit, breathe that purest air,
That heavenly æther, which untroubled sees
The storm of vice and passion rage below.

Tanc. Most true, my lord. But why thus augure ill?
You seem to doubt this prince. I know him not.
Yet oh, methinks, my heart could answer for him!
The juncture is so high, so strong the gale
That blows from heaven, as thro' the deadeft soul
Might breathe the godlike energy of virtue.

Siff. Hear him, immortal shades of his great fathers!—

Forgive me, Sir, this trial of your heart:
Thou! thou art he!

Tanc. *Siffredi!*

Siff. *Tancred*, thou!

Thou art the man, of all the many thousands
That toil upon the bosom of this isle,
By heaven elected to command the rest,
To rule, protect them, and to make them happy!

Tanc. *Manfred* my father! I the last support
Of the famed *Norman* line, that awes the world!
I! who this morning wander'd forth an orphan,
Outcast of all but thee, my second father!
Thus call'd to glory! to the first great lot
Of human kind!—O wonder-working Hand
That, in majestic silence, sways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature;
O grant me, Heaven! the virtues to sustain
This awful burden of so many heroes!
Let me not be exalted into shame,

Set up the worthless pageant of vain grandeur.

Mean-time I thank the justice of the king,
Who has my right bequeath'd me. Thee, *Siffredi*,
I thank thee—O I ne'er enough can thank thee!
Yes, thou hast been—thou art—shalt be my father!
Thou shalt direct my unexperienc'd years,
Shalt be the ruling head, and I the hand.

Siff. It is enough for me—to see my sovereign
Assert his virtues, and maintain his honour.

Tanc. I think, my lord, you said the king committed
To you his will. I hope it is not clogg'd
With any base conditions, any clause,
To tyrannize my heart, and to *Constantia*

Enslave

Enslave my hand devoted to another.
 The hint you just now gave of that alliance,
 You must imagine, wakes my fear. But know,
 In this alone I will not bear dispute,
 Not even from thee, *Siffredi*!—Let the council
 Be strait assembled, and the will there open'd:
 Thence issue speedy orders to convene,
 This day ere noon, the senate: where those barons,
 Who now are in *Palermo*, will attend
 To pay their ready homage to the king,
 Their rightful king, who claims his native crown,
 And will not be a king by deeds and parchments.

Siff. I go, my liege. But once again permit me
 To tell you—Now, now, is the trying crisis,
 That must determine of your future reign.
 O with heroic rigor watch your heart!
 And to the sovereign duties of a king,
 Th' unequal'd pleasures of a God on earth,
 Submit the common joys, the common passions,
 Nay, even the virtues of the private man.

Tanc. Of that no more. They not oppose, but aid,
 Invigorate, cherish, and reward each other.
 The kind all-ruling Wisdom is no tyrant.

S C E N E V.

TANCRED *alone*.

Now, generous *Sigismunda*, comes my turn
 To shew my love was not of thine unworthy,
 When fortune bade me blush to look to thee.
 But what is fortune to the wish of love?
 A miserable bankrupt! O 'tis poor,
 'Tis scanty all, whate'er we can bestow:
 The wealth of kings is wretchedness and want!—
 Quick let me find her! taste that highest joy,
 Th' exalted heart can know, the mixt effusion
 Of gratitude and love!—Behold, she comes!

S C E N E VI.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. My fluttering soul was all on wing to find thee,
 My love! my *Sigismunda*!

Sigisf.

Sigif. O my *Tancred*!

Tell me, what means this mystery and gloom
That low'rs around. Just now involv'd in thought
My father shot athwart me—You, my lord,
Seem strangely mov'd—I fear some dark event
From the king's death to trouble our repose,
That tender calm we in the woods of *Belmont*
So happily enjoy'd—Explain this hurry,
What means it? Say.

Tanc. It means that we are happy!
Beyond our most romantic wishes, happy!

Sigif. You but perplex me more.

Tanc. It means, my fairest!
That thou art queen of *Sicily*; and I
The happiest of mankind! than monarch more!
Because with thee I can adorn my throne.
Manfred, who fell by tyrant *William's* rage,
Famed *Roger's* lineal issue, was my father. [*Pausing.*

You droop, my love; dejected on a sudden;
You seem to mourn my fortune—The soft tear
Springs in thy eye—O let me kiss it off—
Why this, my *Sigismunda*?

Sigif. Royal *Tancred*,
None at your glorious fortune can like me
Rejoice;—yet me alone, of all *Sicilians*,
It makes unhappy.

Tanc. I should hate it then!
Should throw, with scorn, the splendid ruin from me!--
No, *Sigismunda*, 'tis my hope with thee
To share it, whence it draws its richest value.

Sigif. You are my sovereign—I at humble distance—

Tanc. Thou art my queen! the sovereign of my soul!
You never reign'd with such triumphant lustre,
Such winning charms as now; yet, thou art still
The dear, the tender, generous *Sigismunda*!
Who, with a heart exalted far above
Those selfish views, that charm the common breast,
Stoop'd from the height of life, and courted beauty,
Then, then, to love me, when I seem'd of fortune
The hopeless outcast, when I had no friend,
None to protect and own me but thy father.
And would'st thou claim all goodness to thyself!

Can'st

Can'st thou thy *Tancred* deem so dully form'd,
 Of such gross clay, just as I reach the point—
 A point my wildest hopes could never image—
 In that great moment, full of every virtue,
 That I should then so mean a traitor prove
 To the best bliss and honour of mankind,
 So much disgrace the human heart, as then,
 For the dead form of flattery and pomp,
 The faithless joys of courts, to quit kind truth,
 The cordial sweets of friendship and of love,
 The life of life! my all, my *Sigismunda*!
 I could upbraid thy fears, call them unkind,
 Cruel, unjust, an outrage to my heart,
 Did they not spring from love.

Sigif. Think not, my lord,
 That to such vulgar doubts I can descend.
 Your heart, I know, disdains the little thought
 Of changing with the vain external change
 Of circumstance and fortune. Rather thence
 It would, with rising ardor, greatly feel
 A noble pride to shew itself the same.
 But, ah! the hearts of kings are not their own.
 There is a haughty duty that subjects them
 To chains of state, to wed the public welfare,
 And not indulge the tender private virtues.
 Some high-descended princess, who will bring
 New power and interest to your throne, demands
 Your royal hand—perhaps *Constantia*.—

Tanc. She!

O name her not! Were I this moment free,
 And disengag'd as he who never felt
 The powerful eye of beauty, never sigh'd
 For matchless worth like thine, I should abhor
 All thoughts of that alliance. Her fell father
 Most basely murder'd mine; and she his daughter,
 Supported by his barbarous party, still
 His pride inherits, his imperious spirit
 And insolent pretensions to my throne.
 And canst thou deem me then so poorly tame,
 So cool a traitor to my father's blood,
 As from the prudent cowardice of state
 E'er to submit to such a base proposal?

Detested

Detested thought! O doubly, doubly hateful!
 From the two strongest passions; from aversion
 To this *Constantia*—and from love to thee.

Custom, 'tis true, a venerable tyrant,
 O'er servile man extends her blind dominion:
 The pride of kings enslaves them; their ambition,
 Or interest, lords it o'er the better passions.
 But vain their talk, mask'd under specious words
 Of station, duty, and of public good:
 They whom just Heaven has to a throne exalted,
 To guard the rights and liberties of others,
 What duty binds them to betray their own?
 For me, my free-born heart shall bear no dictates,
 But those of truth and honour; wear no chains,
 But the dear chains of love and *Sigismunda*!
 Or if indeed my choice must be directed
 By views of public good, whom shall I chuse
 So fit to grace, to dignify a crown,
 And beam sweet mercy on a happy people,
 As thee, my love? whom place upon my throne
 But thee, descended from the good *Siffredi*?
 'Tis fit that heart be thine, which drew from him
 Whate'er can make it worthy thy acceptance.

Sigif. Cease, cease, to raise my hopes above my duty.
 Charm me no more, my *Tancred*!—O that we
 In those blest woods, where first you won my soul,
 Had pass'd our gentle days; far from the toil
 And pomp of courts! Such is the wish of love;
 Of love, that, with delightful weakness, knows
 No bliss and no ambition but itself.
 But in the world's full light, those charming dreams,
 Those fond illusions vanish. Awful duties,
 The tyranny of men, even your own heart,
 Where lurks a sense your passion stifles now,
 And proud imperious honour call you from me.
 'Tis all in vain—You cannot hush a voice
 That murmurs here—I must not be persuaded!

Tanc. [*kneeling.*] Hear me, thou soul of all my
 hopes and wishes!

And witness, heaven! prime source of love and joy!
 Not a whole warring world combin'd against me;

Its

Its pride, its splendor, its imposing forms,
Nor interest, nor ambition, nor the face
Of solemn state, not even thy father's wisdom,
Shall ever shake my faith to *Sigismunda*.

[*Trumpets and acclamations heard.*]

But, hark! the public voice to duties call me,
Which with unweary'd zeal I will discharge;
And thou, yes thou, shalt be my bright reward—
Yet—ere I go—to hush thy lovely fears,
Thy delicate objections—— [writes his name.]
Take this blank,
Sign'd with my name, and give it to thy father:
Tell him, 'tis my command, it be fill'd up
With a most strict and solemn marriage-contract.
How dear each tye! how charming to my soul!
That more unites me to my *Sigismunda*.

For thee and for my people's good to live,
Is all the bliss which sovereign power can give.

ACT II. SCENE I.

SIFFREDI *alone.*

SO far 'tis well—The late king's will proceeds
Upon the plan I counsel'd; that prince *Tancred*
Shall make *Constantia* partner of his throne.

O great! O wish'd event! whence the dire seeds
Of dark intestine broils, of civil war,
And all its dreadful miseries and crimes,
Shall be for ever rooted from the land.
May these dim eyes, long blasted by the rage
Of cruel faction and my country's woes,
'Tir'd with the toils and vanities of life,
Behold this period, then be clos'd in peace!

But how this mighty obstacle surmount,
Which love has thrown betwixt? Love that disturbs
The schemes of wisdom still; that, wing'd with passion,
Blind and impetuous in its fond pursuits,

Leaves

Leaves the grey-headed reason far behind.
Alas! how frail the state of human bliss!
When even our honest passions oft destroy it.
I was to blame, in solitude and shades,
Infectious scenes! to trust their youthful hearts.
Would I had mark'd the rising flame! that now
Burns out with dangerous force—My daughter owns
Her passion for the king; she trembling own'd it,
With prayers and tears and tender supplications,
That almost shook my firmness—And this blank,
Which his rash fondness gave her, shews how much,
To what a wild extravagance he loves—
I see no means—it foils my deepest thought—
How to controul this madness of the king,
That wears the face of virtue, and will thence
Disdain restraint, will from his generous heart
Borrow new rage, even speciously oppose
To reason, reason—But it must be done.
My own advice, of which I more and more
Approve, the strict conditions of the will,
Highly demand his marriage with *Constantia*;
Or else her party has a fair pretence,—
And all, at once, is horror and confusion—
How issue from this maze?—The crouding barons
Here summon'd to the palace, meet already,
To pay their homage, and confirm the will.
On a few moments hangs the public fate,
On a few hasty moments—Ha! there shone
A gleam of hope—Yes—with this very paper
I yet will save him—Necessary means
For good and noble ends can ne'er be wrong.
In that resistless, that peculiar case,
Deceit is truth and virtue—But how bold
This lion in the toil?—O I will form it
Of such a fatal thread, twist it so strong
With all the ties of honour and of duty,
That his most desperate fury shall not break
The honest snare—Here is the royal hand—
I will beneath it write a perfect, full,
And absolute agreement to the will;
Which read before the nobles of the realm
Assembled, in the sacred face of *Sicily*,

Constantia

Constantia present, every heart and eye
 Fix'd on their monarch, every tongue applauding,
 He must submit, his dream of love must vanish—
 It shall be done!—To me, I know, 'tis ruin ;
 But safety to the public, to the king.
 I will not reason more, I will not listen
 Even to the voice of honour—No—'tis fix'd !
 I here devote me for my prince and country ;
 Let them be safe, and let me nobly perish!

Behold earl *Osmond* comes ; without whose aid
 My schemes are all in vain.

S C E N E II.

OSMOND, SIFFREDI.

Osmon. My lord *Siffredi*,
 I from the council hasten'd to *Constantia*,
 And have accomplish'd what we there propos'd.
 The princess to the will submits her claims.
 She with her presence means to grace the senate,
 And of your royal charge, young *Tancred's* hand,
 Accept. At first, indeed, it shock'd her hopes
 Of reigning sole, this new surprising scene
 Of *Manfred's* son, appointed by the king
 With her joint-heir—But I so fully shew'd
 The justice of the case, the public good
 And sure establish'd peace which thence would rise,
 Join'd to the strong necessity that urg'd her,
 If on *Sicilia's* throne she meant to sit,
 As to the wise disposal of the will
 Her high ambition tamed. Methought, besides,
 I could discern that not from prudence merely
 She to this choice submitted

Siff. Noble *Osmond*,
 You have in this done to the public great
 And signal service. Yes, I must avow it ;
 This frank and ready instance of your zeal,
 In such a trying crisis of the state,
 When interest and ambition might have warp'd
 Your views ; I own, this truly generous virtue
 Upbraids the rashness of my former judgment.

Osmon.

Osmond. *Siffredi*, no—To you belongs the praise;
 The glorious work is yours. Had I not seiz'd,
 Improv'd the wish'd occasion to root out
 Division from the land, and save my country,
 I had been base, been infamous for ever.
 'Tis you, my lord, to whom the many thousands,
 That by the barbarous sword of civil war
 Had fallen inglorious, owe their lives; to you
 The sons of this fair isle, from her first peers
 Down to the swain who tills her golden plains,
 Owe their safe homes, their soft domestic hours,
 And thro' late time posterity shall bless you,
 You who advis'd this will—I blush to think,
 I have so long oppos'd the best good man
 In *Sicily*—With what impartial care
 Ought we to watch o'er prejudice and passion,
 Nor trust too much the jaundic'd eye of party!
 Henceforth its vain delusions I renounce,
 Its hot determinations, that confine
 All merit and all virtue to itself.
 To yours I join my hand; with you will own
 No interest and no party but my country.
 Nor is your friendship only my ambition:
 There is a dearer name, the name of father,
 By which I should rejoice to call *Siffredi*.
 -Your daughter's hand would to the public weal
 Unite my private happiness.

Siff. My lord,
 You have my glad consent. To be allied
 To your distinguish'd family, and merit,
 I shall esteem an honour, From my soul
 I here embrace earl *Osmond* as my friend,
 And son.

Osmond. You make him happy. This assent,
 So frank and warm, to what I long have wish'd,
 Engages all my gratitude; at once,
 In the first blossom, it matures our friendship.
 I from this moment vow myself the friend,
 And zealous servant of *Siffredi's* house.

Enter an officer belonging to the court.

Off. [to *Siffredi*.] The king, my lord, demands your
 speedy presence.

Siff.

Siff. I will attend him strait—Farewel, my lord:
The senate meets; there, a few moments hence,
I will rejoin you.

Osm. There, my noble lord,
We will compleat this salutary work,
Will there begin a new auspicious æra.

S C E N E III.

OSMOND alone.

Siffredi gives his daughter to my wishes—
But does she give herself? Gay, young, and flatter'd.
Perhaps engag'd, will she her youthful heart
Yield to my harsher, uncomplying years?
I am not form'd, by flattery and praise,
By sighs and tears, and all the whining trade
Of love, to feed a fair one's vanity;
To charm at once and spoil her. These soft arts
Nor suit my years nor temper; these be left
To boys and doating age. A prudent father,
By nature charg'd to guide and rule her choice,
Resigns his daughter to a husband's power,
Who with superior dignity, with reason,
And manly tenderness, will ever love her;
Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.

S C E N E IV.

OSMOND, BARONS.

Osm. My lords, I greet you well. This wond'rous
day
Unites us all in amity and friendship,
We meet to-day with open hearts and looks,
Not gloom'd by party, scowling on each other,
But all the children of one happy isle,
The social sons of liberty. No pride,
No passion now, no thwarting views divide us:
Prince *Manfred's* line, at last, to *William's* joined,
Combines us in one family of brothers.
This to the late good king's well-order'd will,

B

And

And wife *Siffredi's* generous care we owe.
 I truly give you joy. First of you all,
 I here renounce those errors and divisions
 That have so long disturb'd our peace, and seem'd,
 Fermenting still, to threaten new commotions—
 By time instructed let us not disdain
 To quit mistakes. We all, my lords, have err'd.
 Men may, I find, be honest, tho' they differ.

1 *Bar.* Who follows not, my lord, the fair example

You set us all, whate'er be his pretence,
 Loves not with single and unbiass'd heart
 His country as he ought.

2 *Bar.* O beauteous peace!

Sweet union of a state! What else, but thou,
 Gives safety, strength, and glory to a people?
 I bow, lord constable, beneath the snow
 Of many years; yet in my breast revives
 A youthful flame. Methinks, I see again
 Those gentle days renew'd, that bless'd our isle,
 Ere by this wasteful fury of division,
 Worse than our *Etna's* most destructive fires,
 It desolated sunk. I see our plains
 Unbounded waving with the gifts of harvest;
 Our seas with commerce throng'd, our busy ports
 With chearful toil. Our *Enna* blooms afresh;
 Afresh the sweets of thymy *Hybla* flow.
 Our nymphs and shepherds, sporting in each vale,
 Inspire new song, and wake the past'ral reed—
 The tongue of age is found—Come, come, my sons;
 I long to see this prince, of whom the world
 Speaks largely well—His father was my friend,
 The brave unhappy *Manfred*—Come, my lords;
 We tarry here too long.

S C E N E V.

TWO OFFICERS, *keeping off the croud.*

One of the croud. Shew us our king,
 The valiant *Manfred's* son, who lov'd the people—
 We must, we will behold him—Give us way.

1. *Off.*

1 *Off.* Pray, gentlemen, give back—it must not be—

Give back, I pray—on such a glad occasion
I would not ill intreat the lowest of you.

2 *MAN of the croud.*

Nay, give us but a glimpse of our young king.
We more than any baron of them all
Will pay him true allegiance.

2 *Off.* Friends—indeed—

You cannot pass this way—We have strict orders,
To keep for him himself, and for the barons,
All these apartments clear—Go to the gate
That fronts the sea, you there will find admission.

All. Long live king *Tancred!* *Manfred's* son—
Huzza! [*Croud goes off.*]

1 *Off.* I do not marvel at their rage of joy:

He is a brave and amiable prince.
When in my lord *Siffredi's* house I liv'd,
Ere by his favour I obtain'd this office,
I there remember well the young count *Tancred.*
To see him and to love him were the same.
He was so noble in his ways, yet still
So affable and mild. Well, well, old *Sicily*,
Yet happy days await thee!

2 *Off.* Grant it, Heaven!

We have seen sad and troublous times enough.
He is, they say, to wed the late king's sister,
Constantia.

1 *Off.* Friend, of that I greatly doubt.

Or I mistake, or lord *Siffredi's* daughter,
The gentle *Sigismunda*, has his heart.
If one may judge by kindly cordial looks,
And fond assiduous care to please each other,
Most certainly they love—O be they blest,
As they deserve! It were great pity aught
Should part a matchless pair: the glory he,
And she the blooming grace of *Sicily!*

2 *Off.* My lord *Rodolpho* comes.

S C E N E VI.

RODOLPHO, *from the senate.*

Rod. My honest friends,
You may retire.

[*Officers go out.*]

A storm is in the wind.
This will perplexes all. No, *Tancred* never
Can stoop to these conditions, which at once
Attack his rights, his honour, and his love.
Those wise old men, those plodding grave state-pedants,
Forget the course of youth; their crooked prudence,
To baseness verging still, forgets to take
Into their fine-spun schemes the generous heart,
That thro' the cobweb system bursting, lays
Their labours waste—So will this business prove,
Or I mistake the king—back from the pomp
He seem'd at first to shrink; and round his brow
I mark'd a gathering cloud, when by his side,
As if design'd to share the public homage,
He saw the tyrant's daughter. But confess'd,
At least to me, the doubling tempest frown'd,
And shook his swelling bosom, when he heard
Th' unjust, the base conditions of the will.
Uncertain, tost in cruel agitation,
He oft, methought, address'd himself to speak
And interrupt *Siffredi*; who appear'd,
With conscious haste, to dread that interruption,
And hurry'd on—But hark! I hear a noise,
As if th' assembly rose!—Ha! *Sigismunda*,
Oppress'd with grief, and wrapt in pensive sorrow,
Passes along—

[*Sigismunda and attendants pass thro' the
back scene. Laura advances.*]

S C E N E VII.

RODOLPHO, LAURA.

Laur. Your high-prais'd friend, the king,
Is false, most vilely false! The meanest slave

Had

Had shown a nobler heart ; nor grossly thus,
 By the first bait ambition spread, been gull'd.
 He *Manfred's* son ! away ! it cannot be !
 The son of that brave prince could ne'er betray
 Those rights so long usurp'd from his great fathers,
 Which he, this day, by such amazing fortune,
 Had just regain'd ; he ne'er could sacrifice
 All faith, all honour, gratitude and love,
 Even just resentment of his father's fate,
 And pride itself ; whate'er exalts a man
 Above the groveling sons of peasant-mud,
 All in a moment—And for what ? why truly,
 For kind permission, gracious leave, to sit
 On his own throne with tyrant *William's* daughter !

Rod. I stand amaz'd—You surely wrong him,
Laura.

There must be some mistake.

Laur. There can be none !

Siffredi read his full and free consent
 Before th' applauding senate. True indeed,
 A small remain of shame, a timorous weakness,
 Even dastardly in falsehood made him blush
 To act this scene in *Sigismunda's* eye,
 Who sunk beneath his perfidy and baseness.
 Hence, till to-morrow he adjourn'd the senate—
 To-morrow fix'd with infamy to crown him !
 Then, leading off his gay triumphant princess,
 He left the poor unhappy *Sigismunda*,
 To bend her trembling steps to that sad home
 His faithless vows will render hateful to her—
 He comes—Farewel—I cannot bear his presence !

S C E N E VIII.

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, RODOLPHO.

Tanc. [entering to *Siffredi*.] Avoid me, hoary traitor !—Go, *Rodolpho*,
 Give orders that all passages this way
 Be shut—Defend me from a hateful world,
 The bane of peace and honour—then return—

What ! dost thou haunt me still ? O monstrous insult !

B 3

Unparallel'd

Unparallel'd indignity! Just heaven!
Was ever king, was ever man so treated?
So trampled into baseness!

Siff. Here, my liege,
Here strike? I nor deserve, nor ask for mercy.

Tanc. Distraction!—O my soul—Hold, reason, hold
Thy giddy feat—O this inhuman outrage
Unhinges thought!

Siff. Exterminate thy servant!

Tanc. All, all but this I could have born—but this!
This daring insolence beyond example!
This murderous stroke that stabs my peace for ever!
That wounds me there—there! where the human heart
Most exquisitely feels—

Siff. O bear it not,
My royal lord! appease on me your vengeance!

Tanc. Did ever tyrant image aught so cruel?
The lowest slave that crawls upon the earth,
Robb'd of each comfort heaven bestows on mortals,
On the bare ground has still his virtue left,
The sacred treasures of an honest heart,
Which thou hast dar'd, with rash audacious hand,
And impious fraud, in me to violate—

Siff. Behold, my liege, that rash audacious hand,
Which not repents its crime—O glorious! happy!
If by my ruin I can save your honour.

Tanc. Such honour I renounce! with sovereign scorn,
Greatly detest it, and its mean adviser!
Hast thou not dared beneath my name to shelter—
My name for other purposes design'd,
Given from the fondness of a faithful heart,
With the best love o'erflowing—hast thou not
Beneath thy sovereign's name basely presum'd
To shield a lie? a lie! in public utter'd,
To all deluded *Sicily*? But know,
This poor contrivance is as weak as base.
In such a wretched toil none can be held
But fools and cowards—soon thy flimsy arts,
Touch'd by my just, my burning indignation,
Shall burst like threads in flame!--Thy doating prudence
But more secures the purpose it would shake.
Had my resolves been wavering and doubtful,

This

This would confirm them, make them fix'd as fate;
 This adds the only motive that was wanting
 To urge them on thro' war and desolation—
 What! marry her! *Constantia*! Her! the daughter
 Of the fell tyrant who destroy'd my father!
 The very thought is madness! Ere thou seest
 The torch of *Hymen* light these hated nuptials,
 Thou shalt behold *Sicilia* wrapt in flames,
 Her cities raz'd, her valleys drench'd with slaughter—
 Love set aside—my pride assumes the quarrel.
 My honour now is up; in spite of thee,
 A world combin'd against me, I will give
 This scatter'd Will in fragments to the winds,
 Assert my rights, the freedom of my heart,
 Crush all who dare oppose me to the dust,
 And heap perdition on thee!

Siff. Sir, 'tis just.

Exhaust on me your rage; I claim it all.
 But for those public threats thy passion utters,
 'Tis what thou canst not do!

Tanc. I cannot! ha!

Driven to the dreadful brink of such dishonour,
 Enough to make the tamest coward brave,
 And into fierceness rouse the mildest nature,
 What shall arrest my vengeance? who?

Siff. Thyself!

Tanc. Away! dare not to justify thy crime!
 That, that alone can aggravate its horror,
 Add insolence to insolence—perhaps
 May make my rage forget——

Siff. O let it burst

On this grey head devoted to thy service!
 But when the storm has vented all its fury,
 Thou then must hear—nay more, I know, thou wilt—
 Wilt hear the calm, yet stronger voice of reason.
 Thou must reflect, that a whole people's safety,
 The weal of trusted millions should bear down,
 Thyself the judge, thy fondest partial pleasure.
 Thou must reflect that there are other duties,
 A nobler pride, a more exalted honour,
 Superior pleasures far, that will oblige,
 Compel thee, to abide by this my deed,

Unwarranted perhaps in common justice,
 But which necessity, even virtue's tyrant,
 With awful voice commanded—Yes, thou must,
 In calmer hours, divest thee of thy love,
 These common passions of the vulgar breast,
 This boiling heat of youth, and be a king!
 The lover of thy people!

Tanc. Truths ill-employ'd!

Abus'd to colour guilt! A king! a king!
 Yes, I will be a king, but not a slave!
 In this will be a king! in this my people
 Shall learn to judge how I will guard their rights,
 When they behold me vindicate my own.
 But have I, say, been treated like a king?——
 Heavens! could I stoop to such outrageous usage,
 I were a mean, a shameless wretch, unworthy
 To wield a sceptre in a land of slaves,
 A foil abhorr'd of virtue, should belye
 My father's blood, belye those very maxims,
 At other times, you taught my youth—*Siffredi!*

[*In a softened tone of voice.*]

Siff. Behold, my prince, behold thy poor old servant,
 Whose darling care, these twenty years, has been
 To nurse thee up to virtue; who for thee,
 Thy glory and thy weal, renounces all,
 All interest or ambition can pour forth;
 What many a selfish father would pursue
 Thro' treachery and crimes: behold him here,
 Bent on his feeble knees, to beg, conjure thee,
 With tears to beg thee, to controul thy passion,
 And save thyself, thy honour, and thy people!
 Kneeling with me behold the many thousands
 To thy protection trusted: fathers, mothers,
 The sacred front of venerable age,
 The tender virgin and the helpless infant;
 The ministers of heaven, those, who maintain,
 Around thy throne, the majesty of rule;
 And those, whose labour, scorch'd by winds and sun,
 Feeds the rejoicing public: see them all,
 Here at thy feet, conjuring thee to save them,
 From misery and war, from crimes and rapine!
 Can there be aught, kind Heaven! in self-indulgence
To

To weigh down these? This aggregate of love,
 With which compar'd the dearest private passion
 Is but the wasted dust upon the balance?
 Turn not away—Oh is there not some part,
 In thy great heart, so sensible to kindness,
 And generous warmth, some nobler part, to feel
 The prayers and tears of these, the mingled voice
 Of heaven and earth!

Tanc. There is! and thou hast touch'd it.
 Rise, rise, *Siffredi*—Oh! thou hast undone me,
 Unkind old man! O ill-entreated *Tancred*!
 Which way so'er I turn, dishonour rears
 Her hideous front—and misery and ruin!
 Was it for this you took such care to form me?
 For this imbued me with the quickest sense
 Of shame; these finer feelings, that ne'er vex
 The common mass of mortals, dully happy
 In blest insensibility? O rather
 You should have fear'd my heart; taught me, that power
 And splendid interest lord it still o'er virtue;
 That, gilded by prosperity and pride,
 There is no shame, no meanness: temper'd thus,
 I had been fit to rule a venal world.
 Alas! what meant thy wantonness of prudence?
 Why have you rais'd this miserable conflict
 Betwixt the duties of the king and man?
 Set virtue against virtue?—Ah, *Siffredi*!
 'Tis thy superfluous, thy unfeeling wisdom,
 That has involv'd me in a maze of error,
 Almost beyond retreat—But hold, my soul,
 Thy steady purpose—Toft by various passions!
 To this eternal anchor keep—There is,
 Can be no public without private virtue—
 Then mark me well, observe what I command;
 It is the sole expedient now remaining—
 To-morrow, when the senate meets again,
 Unfold the whole, unravel the deceit;
 Nor that alone, try to repair its mischief;
 There all thy power, thy eloquence and interest
 Exert, to reinstate me in my rights,
 And from thy own dark snares to disembroil me—
 Start not, my lord—This must and shall be done!

Or here our friendship ends—Howe'er disguis'd,
Whatever thy pretence, thou art a traitor.

Siff. I should indeed deserve the name of traitor,
And even a traitor's fate, had I so slightly,
From principles so weak, done what I did,
As e'er to disavow it—

Tanc. Ha!

Siff. My liege,
Expect not this—Tho' practis'd long in courts,
I have not so far learn'd their subtle trade,
To veer obedient with each gust of passion.
I honour thee, I venerate thy orders,
But honour more my duty. Nought on earth
Shall ever shake me from that solid rock,
Nor smiles nor frowns.—

Tanc. You will not then?

Siff. I cannot!

Tanc. Away! begone!—O my *Rodolpho*, come,
And save me from this traitor!—Hence, I say,
Avoid my presence strait! and know, old man,
Thou my worst foe beneath the mask of friendship,
Who, not content to trample in the dust
My dearest rights, dost with cool insolence
Persist, and call it duty; hadst thou not
A daughter that protects thee, thou shoud'st feel
The vengeance thou deservest—No reply!
Away!

S C E N E IX.

TANCRED, RODOLPHO,

Rod. What can incense my prince so highly
Against his friend *Siffredi*?

Tanc. Friend! *Rodolpho*?

When I have told thee what this friend has done,
How play'd me like a boy, a base-born wretch,
Who had nor heart nor spirit! thou wilt stand
Amaz'd, and wonder at my stupid patience.

Rod. I heard, with mixt astonishment and grief,
The king's unjust dishonourable will,
Void in itself—I saw you stung with rage,

And

And writhing in the snare; just as I went,
At your command, to wait you here—but that
Was the king's deed, not his.

Tanc. O he advis'd it!

These many years he has in secret hatch'd
This black contrivance, glorious in the scheme,
And proudly plumes him with his traiterous virtue.
But that was nought, *Rodolpho*, nothing, nothing!
O that was gentle, blameless, to what follow'd!
I had, my friend, to *Sigismunda* given,
To hush her fears, in the full gush of fondness,
A blank sign'd by my hand—and he—O heavens!
Was ever such a wild attempt!—he wrote
Beneath my name an absolute compliance
To this detested Will; nay, dared to read it
Before myself, on my insulted throne
His idle pageant plac'd—O words are weak
To paint the pangs, the rage, the indignation,
That whirl'd from thought to thought my soul in tem-
pest,

Now on the point to burst, and now by shame
Repress'd—But in the face of *Sicily*,
All mad with acclamation, what, *Rodolpho*,
What could I do? The sole relief that rose
To my distracted mind, was to adjourn
'Th' assembly till to-morrow—But to-morrow
What can be done?—O it avails not what!
I care not what is done—My only care
Is how to clear my faith to *Sigismunda*.
She thinks me false! She cast a look that kill'd me!
O I am base in *Sigismunda's* eye!
The lowest of mankind, the most perfidious!

Rod. This was a strain of insolence indeed,
A daring outrage of so strange a nature,
As stuns me quite——

Tanc. Curs'd be my timid prudence!
That dash'd not back, that moment, in his face,
The bold presumptuous lie—and curs'd this hand!
That from a start of poor dissimulation,
Led off my *Sigismunda's* hated rival.
Ah then! what, poison'd by the false appearance,
What, *Sigismunda*, were thy thoughts of me?

How,

How, in the silent bitterness of soul,
 How didst thou scorn me! hate mankind, thyself,
 For trusting to the vows of faithless *Tancred*!
 For such I seem'd—I was!—The thought distracts me!
 I should have cast a flattering world aside,
 Rush'd from my throne, before them all avow'd her,
 The choice, the glory of my free-born heart,
 And spurn'd the shameful fetters thrown upon it—
 Instead of that—confusion!—what I did
 Has clinch'd the chain, confirm'd *Siffredi's* crime,
 And fix'd me down to infamy!

Rod. My lord,
 Blame not the conduct, which your situation
 Tore from your tortur'd heart—What could you do?
 Had you, so circumstanc'd, in open senate,
 Before th' astonish'd public, with no friends
 Prepar'd, no party form'd, affronted thus
 The haughty princess and her powerful faction,
 Supported by this Will, the sudden stroke,
 Abrupt and premature, might have recoil'd
 Upon yourself, even your own friends revolted,
 And turn'd at once the public scale against you.
 Besides, consider had you then detected
 In its fresh guilt this action of *Siffredi*,
 You must with signal vengeance have chastis'd
 The treasonable deed—Nothing so mean
 As weak insulted power that dares not punish.
 And how would that have suited with your love?
 His daughter present too? Trust me, your conduct,
 Howe'er abhorrent to a heart like yours,
 Was fortunate and wise—Not that I mean
 E'er to advise submission—

Tanc. Heavens! Submission!
 Could I descend to bear it, even in thought,
 Despise me, you, the world, and *Sigismunda*!
 Submission! No!—To-morrow's glorious light
 Shall flash discovery on this scene of baseness.
 Whatever be the risque, by heavens! to-morrow,
 I will o'erturn the dirty lie-built schemes
 Of these old men, and shew my faithful senate,
 That *Manfred's* son knows to assert and wear,
 With undiminish'd dignity, that crown

This

This unexpected day has plac'd upon him.
 But this, my friend, these stormy gusts of pride
 Are foreign to my love—Till *Sigismunda*
 Be disabus'd, my breast is tumult all,
 And can obey no settled course of reason.
 I see her still, I feel her powerful image,
 That look, where with reproach complaint was mix'd,
 Big with soft woe and gentle indignation,
 Which seem'd at once to pity and to scorn me——
 O let me find her! I too long have left
 My *Sigismunda* to converse with tears,
 A prey to thoughts that picture me a villain.
 But ah! how, clogg'd, with this accursed state,
 A tedious world, shall I now find access?
 Her father too—Ten thousand horrors croud
 Into the wild fantastic eye of love——
 Who knows what he may do? Come then, my friend,
 And by thy sister's hand O let me steal
 A letter to her bosom—I no longer
 Can bear her absence, by the just contempt
 She now must brand me with, inflam'd to madness.
 Fly, my *Rodolpho*, fly! engage thy sister
 To aid my letter, and this very evening
 Secure an interview—I would not bear
 This rack another day, not for my kingdom!
 Till then deep-plung'd in solitude and shades,
 I will not see the hated face of man.
 Thought drives on thought, on passions, passions roll;
 Her smiles alone can calm my raging soul.

END of the SECOND ACT.

ACT III. SCENE I.

SIGISMUNDA alone, sitting in a disconsolate posture.

AH tyrant prince! ah more than faithless *Tancred*!
 Ungenerous and inhuman in thy falshood!
 Hadst thou, this morning, when my hopeless heart,
 Submissive to my fortune and my duty,

Had

Had so much spirit left, as to be willing
 To give thee back thy vows, ah! hadst thou then
 Confess'd the sad necessity thy state
 Impos'd upon thee, and with gentle friendship,
 Since we must part at last, our parting soften'd :
 I should indeed—I should have been unhappy,
 But not to this extreme—Amidst my grief,
 I had, with pensive pleasure, cherish'd still
 The sweet remembrance of thy former love ;
 Thy image still had dwelt upon my soul,
 And made our guiltless woes not undelightful,
 But coolly thus—How couldst thou be so cruel?—
 Thus to revive my hopes, to sooth my love
 And call forth all its tenderness, then sink me
 In black despair—What unrelenting pride
 Possess'd thy breast, that thou couldst bear unmov'd
 To see me bent beneath a weight of shame ?
 Pangs thou canst never feel? How couldst thou drag me,
 In barbarous triumph at a rival's car?
 How make me witness to a sight of horror?
 That hand, which, but a few short hours ago,
 So wantonly abus'd my simple faith,
 Before th' attesting world given to another,
 Irrevocably given!—There was a time,
 When the least cloud that hung upon my brow,
 Perhaps imagin'd only, touch'd thy pity.
 Then, brighten'd often by the ready tear,
 Thy looks were softness all ; then the quick heart,
 In every nerve alive, forgot itself,
 And for each other then we felt alone.
 But now, alas ! those tender days are fled ;
 Now thou canst see me wretched, pierc'd with anguish,
 With studied anguish of thy own creating,
 Nor wet thy harden'd eye—Hold, let me think—
 I wrong thee sure ; thou canst not be so base,
 As meanly in my misery to triumph.
 What is it then ? Why should I search for pain?—
 O 'tis as bad!—'Tis fickleness of nature,
 'Tis sickly love extinguish'd by ambition—
 Is there, kind heaven, no constancy in man ?
 No steadfast truth, no generous fixt affection,
 That can bear up against a selfish world ?

No,

No, there is none—Even *Tancred* is inconstant?

[*Rising.*]

Hence! let me fly this scene!—Whate'er I see,
These roofs, these walls, each object that surrounds me,
Are tainted with his vows—But whither fly?
The groves are worse, the soft retreat of *Belmont*,
Its deepening glooms, gay lawns, and airy summits,
Will wound my busy memory to torture,
And all its shades will whisper—faithless *Tancred*!—
My father comes.—How, sunk in this disorder,
Shall I sustain his presence?

S C E N E II.

SIFFREDI, SIGISMUNDA.

Siff. Sigismunda,

My dearest child! I grieve to find thee thus
A prey to tears. I know the powerful cause
From which they flow, and therefore can excuse them,
But not their wilful obstinate continuance.
Come, rouse thee then, call up thy drooping spirit;
Come, wake to reason from this dream of love,
And shew the world thou art *Siffredi's* daughter.

Sigif. Alas! I am unworthy of that name.

Siff. Thou art indeed to blame; thou hast too rashly
Engag'd thy heart, without a father's sanction.
But this I can forgive. The king has virtues,
That plead thy full excuse; nor was I void
Of blame, to trust thee to those dangerous virtues.
Then dread not my reproaches. Tho' he blames,
Thy tender father pities more than blames thee.
Thou art my daughter still; and, if thy heart
Will now resume its pride, assert itself,
And greatly rise superior to this trial!
I to my warmest confidence again
Will take thee, and esteem thee more my daughter.

Sigif. O you are gentler far than I deserve!
It is, it ever was, my darling pride,
To bend my soul to your supreme commands,
Your wisest will; and tho', by love betray'd—
Alas! and punish'd too—I have transgress'd

The

The nicest bounds of duty, yet I feel
 A sentiment of tenderness, a source
 Of filial nature springing in my breast,
 That, should it kill me, shall controul this passion,
 And make me all submission and obedience
 To you, my honour'd lord, the best of fathers.

Siff. Come to my arms, thou comfort of my age!
 Thou only joy and hope of these grey hairs!
 Come! let me take thee to a parent's heart;
 There, with the kindly aid of my advice,
 Even with the dew of these paternal tears,
 Revive and nourish this becoming spirit——
 Then thou dost promise me, my *Sigismunda*——
 Thy father stoops to make it his request——
 Thou wilt resign thy fond presumptuous hopes,
 And henceforth never more indulge one thought
 That in the light of love regards the king?

Sigif. Hopes I have none! Those by this fatal day
 Are blasted all—But from my soul to banish,
 While weeping memory there retains her seat,
 Thoughts which the purest bosom might have cherish'd
 Once my delight, now even in anguish charming,
 Is more, alas! my lord, that I can promise

Siff. Absence and time, the softner of our passions,
 Will conquer this. Mean-time, I hope from thee
 A generous great effort; that thou wilt now
 Exert thy utmost force, nor languish thus
 Beneath the vain extravagance of love.
 Let not thy father blush to hear it said,
 His daughter was so weak, e'er to admit
 A thought so void of reason, that a king
 Should to his rank, his honour and his glory,
 The high important duties of a throne,
 Even to his throne itself, madly prefer
 A wild romantic passion, the fond child
 Of youthful dreaming thought and vacant hours;
 That he should quit his heaven-appointed station,
 Desert his awful charge, the care of all
 The toiling millions which this isle contains;
 Nay more, should plunge them into war and ruin:
 And all to sooth a sick imagination,
 A miserable weakness—Must for thee,

To

To make thee blest, *Sicilia* be unhappy?
 The king himself, lost to the nobler sense
 Of manly praise, become the piteous hero
 Of some soft tale, and rush on sure destruction?
 Canst thou, my daughter, let the monstrous thought
 Possess one moment thy perverted fancy?
 Rouse thee, for shame! and if a spark of virtue
 Lyes slumbering in thy soul, bid it blaze forth;
 Nor sink unequal to the glorious lesson,
 This day thy lover gave thee from his throne.

Sigis. Ah, that was not from virtue!—Had, my father,

That been his aim, I yield to what you say;
 'Tis powerful truth, unanswerable reason.
 Then, then, with sad, but duteous resignation,
 I had submitted, as became your daughter;
 But in that moment, when my humbled hopes
 Were to my duty reconcil'd, to raise them
 To yet a fonder height than e'er they knew,
 Then rudely dash them down—There is the sting!
 The blasting view is ever present to me—
 Why did you drag me to a sight so cruel?

Siff. It was a scene to fire thy emulation.

Sigis. It was a scene of perfidy!—But know,
 I will do more than imitate the king—
 For he is false!—I, tho' sincerely pierc'd
 With the best, truest passion, ever touch'd
 A virgin's breast, here vow to heaven and you,
 Tho' from my heart I cannot, from my hopes
 To cast this Prince—What would you more, my father?

Siff. Yes, one thing more—thy father then is happy—
 Tho' by the voice of innocence and virtue
 Absolv'd, we live not to ourselves alone:
 A rigorous world, with peremptory sway,
 Subjects us all, and even the noblest most.
 This world from thee, my honour and thy own,
 Demands one step; a step, by which convinc'd
 The king may see thy heart disdains to wear
 A chain which his has greatly thrown aside.
 'Tis fitting too, thy sex's pride commands thee,
 To shew th' approving world thou canst resign,
 As well as he, nor with inferior spirit,

A passion

A passion fatal to the public weal.

But, above all, thou must root out for ever
From the king's breast the least remain of hope,
And henceforth make his mention'd love dishonour.
These things, my daughter, that must needs be done,
Can but this way be done——by the safe refuge,
The sacred shelter of a husband's arms.
And there is one——

Sigif. Good heavens! what means my lord?

Siff. One of illustrious family, high rank,
Yet still of higher dignity and merit,
Who can and will protect thee; one to awe
The king himself—Nay, hear me, *Sigismunda*—
The noble *Osmond* courts thee for his bride,
And has my plighted word—This day—

Sigif. [*kneeling*] My father!

Let me with trembling arms embrace thy knees!
O if you ever wish'd to see me happy;
If e'er in infant years I gave you joy,
When, as I prattling twin'd around your neck,
You snatch'd me to your bosom, kiss'd my eyes,
And melting said you saw my mother there;
O save me from that worst severity
Of fate! O outrage not my breaking heart
To that degree—I cannot!—'tis impossible!—
So soon withdraw it, give it to another—
Hear me, my dearest father! hear the voice
Of nature and humanity, that plead
As well as justice for me!—Not to chuse
Without your wise direction may be duty;
But still my choice is free—That is a right,
Which even the lowest slave can never lose.
And would you thus degrade me? make me base?
For such it were, to give my worthless person
Without my heart, an injury to *Osmond*,
The highest can be done—Let me, my lord—
Or I shall die, shall by the sudden change
Be to distraction shock'd—let me wear out
My hapless days in solitude and silence,
Far from the malice of a prying world!
At least—you cannot sure refuse me this—
Give me a little time—I will do all,

All I can do, to please you!—O your eye
Sheds a kind beam——

Siff. My daughter! you abuse
The softness of my nature——

Sigif. Here, my father,
Till you relent, here will I grow for ever!

Siff Rise, *Sigismunda*.—Tho' you touch my heart,
Nothing can shake th' inexorable dictates
Of honour, duty, and determin'd reason.

Then by the holy ties of filial love,
Resolve, I charge thee, to receive earl *Osmond*,
As suits the man who is thy father's choice,
And worthy of thy hand—I go to bring him—

Sigif. Spare me, my dearest father!

Siff, [*aside*.] I must rush
From her soft grasp, or nature will betray me!

O grant us, Heaven! that fortitude of mind,
Which listens to our duty, not our passions—
Quit me, my child!

Sigif. You cannot, O my father!
You cannot leave me thus!

Siff. Come hither, *Laura*.
Come to thy friend. Now shew thyself a friend.
Combat her weakness; dissipate her tears;
Cherish, and reconcile her to her duty.

S C E N E III.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Sigif. O woe on woe! distress'd by love and duty!
O every way unhappy *Sigismunda*!

Laur. Forgive me, madam, if I blame your grief.
How can you waste your tears on one so false?
Unworthy of your tenderness? to whom
Nought but contempt is due and indignation?

Sigif. You know not half the horrors of my fate!
I might perhaps have learn'd to scorn his falshood;
Nay, when the first sad burst of tears was past,
I might have rous'd my pride and scorn'd himself—
But 'tis too much, this greatest last misfortune—
O whither shall I fly? Where hide me, *Laura*,

From

From the dire scene my father now prepares!

Laur. What thus alarms you, madam!

Sigif. Can it be?

Can I——ah no!——at once give to another

My violated heart? in one wild moment?

He brings earl *Osmond* to receive my vows!

O dreadful change! for *Tancred*, haughty *Osmond*!

Laur. Now, on my soul, 'tis what an outrag'd heart,
Like your's, should wish—I should, by heavens, esteem it
Most exquisite revenge!

Sigif. Revenge on whom?

On my own heart, already but too wretched!

Laur. On him! this *Tancred*! who has basely sold,
For the dull form of despicable grandeur,
His faith, his love!—At once a slave and tyrant!

Sigif. Oh rail at me, at my believing folly,
My vain ill-founded hopes, but spare him, *Laura*!

Laur. Who rais'd these hopes? who triumphs o'er
that weakness?

Pardon the word—You greatly merit him;

Better than him, with all his giddy pomp!

You rais'd him by your smiles when he was nothing!

Where is your woman pride; that guardian spirit

Given us to dash the perfidy of man?

Ye powers! I cannot bear the thought with patience—

Yet recent from the most unsparing vows

The tongue of love e'er lavish'd; from your hopes

So vainly, idly, cruelly deluded;

Before the public thus, before your father,

By an irrevocable solemn deed,

With such inhuman scorn, to throw you from him!

To give his faithless hand, yet warm from thine,

With complicated meanness, to *Constantia*!

And to compleat his crime, when thy weak limbs

Could scarce support thee, then, of thee regardless,

To lead her off!

Sigif. That was indeed a sight

To poison love! to turn it into rage

And keen contempt!—What means this stupid weak-
ness

That hangs upon me? Hence, unworthy tears!

Disgrace my cheek no more! No more my heart,

For

For one so coolly false or meanly fickle—
 O it imports not which—dare to suggest
 The least excuse!—Yes, traitor, I will wring
 Thy pride, will turn thy triumph to confusion!
 I will not pine away my days for thee,
 Sighing to brooks and groves; while, with vain pity,
 You in a rival's arms lament my fate——
 No! let me perish! ere I tamely be
 That soft, that patient, gentle *Sigismunda*,
 Who can console her with the wretched boast,
 She was for thee unhappy!—if I am,
 I will be nobly so!—*Sicilia's* daughters
 Shall wondering see in me a great example
 Of one who punish'd an ill-judging heart,
 Who made it bow to what it most abhorr'd!
 Crush'd it to misery! for having thus
 So lightly listen'd to a worthless lover!

Laur. At last it mounts! the kindling pride of
 virtue:

Trust me, thy marriage will imbitter his——

Sigif. O may the furies light his nuptial torch!
 Be it accurs'd as mine! for the fair peace,
 The tender joys of hymeneal love,
 May jealousy awak'd, and fell remorse,
 Pour all their fiercest venom thro' his breast!
 Where the fates lead, and blind revenge, I follow!—
 Let me not think—By injur'd love! I vow,
 Thou shalt, base prince! perfidious and inhuman!
 Thou shalt behold me in another's arms!
 In his thou hatest! *Osmond's*!

Laur. That will grind
 His heart with secret rage! Aye, that will sting
 His soul to madness! set him up a terror,
 A spectacle of woe to faithless lovers!
 Your cooler thought, besides, will of the change
 Approve, and think it happy. Noble *Osmond*
 From the same stock with him derives his birth,
 First of *Sicilian* barons, prudent, brave,
 Of strictest honour, and by all rever'd.——

Sigif. Talk not of *Osmond*, but perfidious *Tancred*!
 Rail at him, rail! invent new names of scorn!
 Assist me, *Laura*; lend my rage fresh fuel;

Support

Support my staggering purpose, which already
 Begins to fail me—Ah, my vaunts how vain!
 How have I ly'd to my own heart!—Alas!
 My tears return, the mighty flood o'erwhelms me?
 Ten thousand crowding images distract
 My tortur'd thought—And is it come to this?
 Our hopes? our vows? our oft repeated wishes,
 Breath'd from the fervent soul, and full of heaven,
 To make each other happy?—come to this!

Laur. If thy own peace and honour cannot keep
 Thy resolution fix'd, yet, *Sigismunda*,
 O think, how deeply, how beyond retreat,
 Thy father is engag'd.

Sigif. Ah wretched weakness!
 That thus enthrals my soul, that chases thence
 Each nobler thought, the sense of every duty!—
 And have I then no tears for thee, my father?
 Can I forget thy cares, from helpless years,
 Thy tenderness for me? an eye still beam'd
 With love? a brow that never knew a frown?
 Nor a harsh word thy tongue? Shall I for these
 Repay thy stooping venerable age,
 With shame, disquiet, anguish and dishonour?
 It must not be!—Thou first of angels! come,
 Sweet filial piety! and firm my breast!
 Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit,
 Be nobly wretched—but her father happy!—
Laura! they come!—O heavens! I cannot stand
 The horrid trial!—Open, open, earth!
 And hide me from their view!

Laur. Madam!—

S C E N E IV.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Siff. My daughter,
 Behold my noble friend who courts thy hand,
 And whom to call my son I shall be proud;
 Nor shall I less be pleas'd in this alliance
 To see thee happy.

Osfn. Think not, I presume,

Madam,

Madam, on this your father's kind consent,
To make me blest. I love you from a heart,
That seeks your good superior to my own;
And will, by every art of tender friendship,
Consult your dearest welfare. May I hope,
Yours does not disavow your father's choice?

Sigif. I am a daughter, Sir—and have no power
O'er my own heart—I die—Support me, *Laura*.

[*Faints.*]

Siff. Help—Bear her off—She breathes—my
daughter!—

Sigif. Oh!—
Forgive my weakness—soft—my *Laura*, lead me—
To my apartment.

Siff. Pardon me, my lord,
If, by this sudden accident alarm'd,
I leave you for a moment.

S C E N E V.

OSMOND *alone.*

Let me think—

What can this mean?—Is it to me aversion!
Or is it, as I fear'd, she loves another?
Ha!—yes—perhaps the king, the young count *Tancred*!
They were bred up together—Surely that,
That cannot be—Has he not given his hand
In the most solemn manner to *Constantia*?
Does not his crown depend upon the deed?
No—if they lov'd, and this old statesman knew it,
He could not to a king prefer a subject.
His virtues I esteem—nay more, I trust them—
So far as virtue goes—but could he place
His daughter on the throne of *Sicily*—
O'tis a glorious bribe, too much for man!—
What is it then?—I care not what it be.
My honour now, my dignity demands,
That my propos'd alliance, by her father,
And even herself accepted, be not scorn'd.
I love her too—I never knew till now
To what a pitch I lov'd her. O she shot

Ten thousand charms into my inmost soul!
 She look'd so mild, so amiably gentle,
 She bow'd her head, she glow'd with such confusion,
 Such loveliness of modesty! She is,
 In gracious mind, in manners, and in person,
 The perfect model of all female beauty!—
 She must be mine—She is!—If yet her heart
 Consents not to my happiness, her duty,
 Join'd to my tender cares, will gain so much
 Upon her generous nature—That will follow.
 The man of sense, who acts a prudent part,
 Not flattering steals, but forms himself the heart.

END of the THIRD ACT.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

The garden belonging to SIFFREDI's house.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

SIGISMUNDA, *with a letter in her hand.*

'TIS done!—I am a slave!—The fatal vow
 Has pass'd my lips!—Methought in those sad
 moments,

The tombs around, the saints, the darken'd altar,
 And all the trembling shrines with horror shook.

But here is still new matter of distress.

O *Tancred*, cease to persecute me more!

O grudge me not some calmer state of woe!

Some quiet gloom to shade my hopeless days,

Where I may never hear of love and thee!—

Has *Laura* too conspir'd against my peace?

Why did you take this letter?—bear it back—

[*Giving her the letter.*]

I will not court new pain.

Laur. Madam, Rodolpho

Urg'd me so much, nay, even with tears conjur'd me,
 But this once more to serve th' unhappy king—

For

For such he said he was—that tho' enrag'd,
 Equal with thee, at his inhuman falshood,
 I could not to my brother's fervent prayers
 Refuse this office—Read it—His excuses
 Will only more expose his falshood.

Sigif. No.

It suits not *Osmond's* wife to read one line
 From that contagious hand—she knows too well!

Laur. He paints him out distress'd beyond expression,
 Even on the point of madness. Wild as winds,
 And fighting seas, he raves. His passions mix,
 With ceaseless rage, all in each giddy moment.
 He dies to see you and to clear his faith.

Sigif. Save me from that!—That would be worse
 than all!

Laur. I but report my brother's words; who then
 Began to talk of some dark imposition,
 That had deceiv'd us all: when, interrupted,
 We heard your father and earl *Osmond* near,
 As summon'd to *Constantia's* court they went.

Sigif. Ha! imposition?—Well!—If I am doom'd
 To be, o'er all my sex, the wretch of love,
 In vain I would resist—Give me the letter—
 To know the worst is some relief—Alas!
 It was not thus, with such dire palpitations,
 That, *Tancred*, once I us'd to read thy letters.

[*Attempting to read the letter, but gives it to Laura.*]
 Ah, fond remembrance blinds me!—Read it, *Laura*.

LAURA reads.

Deliver me, Sigismunda, from that most exquisite misery which a faithful heart can suffer—To be thought base by her, from whose esteem even virtue borrows new charms. When I submitted to my cruel situation, it was not falshood you beheld, but an excess of love. Rather than endanger that, I for a while gave up my honour. Every moment till I see you stabs me with severer pangs than real guilt itself can feel. Let me then conjure you to meet me in the garden, towards the close of the day, when I will explain this mystery. We have been most inhumanely abused; and that by the means of the very

C

paper

paper which I gave you, from the warmest sincerity of love, to assure to you the heart and hand of

Tancred.

Sigif. There, *Laura*, there, the dreadful secret sprung!

That paper! ah that paper! it suggests
A thousand horrid thoughts—I to my father
Gave it; and he perhaps—I dare not cast
A look that way—if yet indeed you love me,
O blast me not, kind *Tancred*, with the truth!
O pitying keep me ignorant for ever!
What strange peculiar misery is mine?
Reduc'd to wish the man I love were false!
Why was I hurry'd to a step so rash?
Repairless woe!—I might have waited, sure,
A few short hours—No duty that forbid—
I ow'd thy love that justice; till this day
Thy love an image of all perfect goodness!
A beam from heaven that glow'd with every virtue!
And have I thrown this prize of life away?
The piteous wreck of one distracted moment?
Ah the cold prudence of remorseless age!
Ah parents, traitors to your children's bliss!
Ah curs'd, ah blind revenge!—On every hand
I was betray'd—You, *Laura*, too, betray'd me!—

Laur. Who, who, but he, whate'er he writes, betray'd you?

Or false or pusillanimous. For once,
I will with you suppose, that this agreement
To the king's will was forg'd—Tho' forg'd by whom?
Your father scorns the crime. Yet what avails it?
This, if it clears his truth, condemns his spirit.
A youthful king, by love and honour fir'd,
Patient to sit on his insulted throne,
And let an outrage, of so high a nature,
Unpunish'd pass, uncheck'd, uncontradicted—
O'tis a meanness equal even to falsehood!

Sigif. *Laura*, no more—We have already judg'd
Too largely without knowledge. Oft, what seems
A trifle, a mere nothing, by itself,
In some nice situations, turns the scale
Of fate, and rules the most important actions.

Yes, I begin to feel a sad presage :
 I am undone from that eternal source
 Of human woes—The judgment of the passions.
 But what have I to do with these excuses ?
 O cease, my treacherous heart, to give them room !
 It suits not thee to plead a lover's cause ;
 Even to lament my fate is now dishonour.
 Nought now remains, but with relentless purpose
 To shun all interviews, all clearing up
 Of this dark scene ; to wrap myself in gloom,
 In solitude and shades ; there to devour
 The silent sorrows ever swelling here ;
 And since I must be wretched—for I must—
 To claim the mighty misery myself,
 Engross it all, and spare a hapless father.
 Hence let me fly!—the hour approaches——

Laur. Madam,

Behold he comes—the king—

Sigif. Heavens ! how escape ?

No—I will stay—This one last meeting—Leave me.

S C E N E II.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. And are these long long hours of torture
 past ?

My life ! my *Sigismunda* !

[*Throwing himself at her feet.*]

Sigif. Rise, my lord.

To see my sovereign thus no more becomes me.

Tanc. O let me kiss the ground on which you tread !

Let me exhale my soul in softest transport !

Since I again embrace my *Sigismunda* ! [Rising.]

Unkind ! how couldst thou ever deem me false ?

How thus dishonour love ;—O I could much

Embitter my complaint !—How low were then

Thy thoughts of me ? How didst thou then affront

The human heart itself ? After the vows,

The fervent truth, the tender protestations,

Which mine has often pour'd, to let thy breast,

Whate'er th' appearance was, admit suspicion ?

Sigif. How ! when I heard myself your full consent

To the late king's so just and prudent will?
 Heard it before you read, in solemn senate?
 When I beheld you give your royal hand,
 To her, whose birth and dignity, of right,
 Demands that high alliance? Yes, my lord,
 You have done well. The man, whom heaven appoints
 To govern others, should himself first learn
 To bend his passions to the sway of reason.
 In all you have done well; but when you bid
 My humbled hopes look up to you again,
 And sooth'd with wanton cruelty my weakness—
 That too was well—My vanity deserv'd
 The sharp rebuke, whose fond extravagance
 Could ever dream to balance your repose,
 Your glory and the welfare of a people.

Tanc. Chide on, chide on. Thy soft reproaches now,
 Instead of wounding, only sooth my fondness.
 No, no, thou charming consort of my soul!
 I never lov'd thee with such faithful ardor,
 As in that cruel miserable moment
 You thought me false; when even my honour stoop'd
 To wear for thee a baffled face of baseness.
 It was thy barbarous father, *Sigismunda*,
 Who caught me in the toil. He turn'd that paper,
 Meant for th' assuring bond of nuptial love,
 To ruin it for ever; he, he wrote
 That forg'd consent, you heard, beneath my name;
 Nay, dar'd before my outraged throne to read it!
 Had he not been thy father—Ha! my love!
 You tremble, you grow pale.

Sigis. Oh leave me, *Tancred*!

Tanc. No!—Leave thee?—Never! never! till you set
 My heart at peace, till these dear lips again
 Pronounce thee mine! Without thee I renounce
 Myself, my friends, the world—Here on this hand—

Sigis. My lord, forget that hand, which never now
 Can be to thine united—

Tanc. *Sigismunda*!

What dost thou mean? Thy words, thy look, thy manner
 Seem to conceal some horrid secret—heavens!—
 No—That was wild—Distraction fires the thought!—

Sigis. Enquire no more—I never can be thine.

Tanc.

Tanc. What, who shall interpose? who dares attempt
To brave the fury of an injur'd king?
Who, ere he sees thee ravish'd from his hopes,
Will wrap all blazing *Sicily* in flames——

Sigif. In vain your power, my lord—This fatal error,
Join'd to my father's unrelenting will,
Has plac'd an everlasting bar betwixt us—
I am—earl *Osmond's*—Wife.

Tanc. Earl *Osmond's* wife!——

[*After a long pause, during which they
look at one another with the highest
agitation and most tender distress.*]

Heavens! did I hear thee right? what! marry'd?
marry'd?

Lost to thy faithful *Tancred*? lost for ever!
Couldst thou then doom me to such matchless woe,
Without so much as hearing me?—Distraction!—
Alas! what hast thou done? Ah, *Sigismunda*!
Thy rash credulity has done a deed,
Which of two happiest lovers—that ere felt
The blissful power, has made two finish'd wretches!
But—Madness!—Sure, thou know'st it cannot be!
This hand is mine!—a thousand thousand vows——

S C E N E III.

TANCRED, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA.

Os. [*Snatching her hand from the king.*] Madam,
this hand, by the most solemn rites,

A little hour ago, was given to me:
And did not sovereign honour now command me,
Never but with my life to quit my claim,
I would renounce it——thus!

Tanc. Ha! who art thou!

Presumptuous man?

Sigif. [*aside.*] Where is my father? heavens! [*Goes out.*]

Os. One thou shouldst better know—Yes—view
me—one!

Who can and will maintain his rights and honour,
Against a faithless prince, an upstart king,
Whose first base deed is what a harden'd tyrant
Would blush to act.

Tanc. Insolent *Osmond*! know,
 This upstart king will hurl confusion on thee,
 And all who shall invade his sacred rights,
 Prior to thine—Thine founded on compulsion,
 On infamous deceit; while his proceed
 From mutual love and free long-plighted faith.
 She is, and shall be mine!—I will annul,
 By the high power with which the laws invest me,
 Those guilty forms in which you have entrap'd
 Basely entrap'd, to thy detested nuptials,
 My queen betroth'd; who has my heart, my hand,
 And shall partake my throne—If, haughty lord,
 If this thou didst not know, then know it now!
 And know besides, as I have told thee this,
 Shouldst thou but think to urge thy treason further—
 Than treason more! treason against my love!—
 Thy life shall answer for it!

Osmond. Ha! my life!—

It moves my scorn to hear thy empty threats.
 When was it that a *Norman* baron's life
 Became so vile, as on the frown of kings
 To hang?—Of that, my lord, the law must judge;
 Or if the law be weak, my guardian sword—

Tanc. Dare not to touch it, traitor! lest my rage
 Break loose, and do a deed that misbecomes me.

S C E N E I V.

T A N C R E D, S I F F R E D I, O S M O N D.

Siff [*entering.*] My gracious lord! what is it I behold?
 My sovereign in contention with his subjects?
 Surely this house deserves from royal *Tancred*
 A little more regard than to be made
 A scene of troubles and unseemly jars.
 It grieves my soul, it baffles every hope,
 It makes me sick of life, to see thy glory
 Thus blasted in the bud—Heavens! can your highness
 From your exalted character descend,
 The dignity of virtue; and, instead
 Of being the protector of our rights,
 The holy guardian of domestic bliss,
 Unkindly thus disturb the sweet repose,

The

The sacred peace of families, for which
Alone the free-born race of man to laws
And government submitted?

Tanc. My lord *Siffredi*,
Spare thy rebuke. The duties of my station
Are not to me unknown—But thou, old man,
Dost thou not blush to talk of rights invaded?
And of our best, our dearest bliss disturb'd?
Thou! who with more than barbarous perfidy
Hast trampled all allegiance, justice, truth,
Humanity itself, beneath thy feet?
Thou know'st thou hast—I could, to thy confusion,
Return thy hard reproaches; but I spare thee,
Before this lord, for whose ill-sorted friendship
Thou hast most basely sacrific'd thy daughter.
Farewel, my lord!—For thee, lord constable,
Who dost presume to lift thy surly eye
To my soft love, my gentle *Sigismunda*,
I once again command thee, on thy life—
Yes—chew thy rage—but mark me—on thy life,
No further urge thy arrogant pretensions!

S C E N E V.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND.

Osmond. Ha! arrogant pretensions! heaven and earth!
What! arrogant pretensions to my wife?
My wedded wife! Where are we? In a land
Of civil rule, of liberty and laws?—
Not on my life pursue them?—Giddy prince!
My life disdains thy nod. It is the gift
Of parent heaven, who gave me too an arm,
A spirit to defend it against tyrants.
The *Norman* race, the sons of mighty *Rollo*,
Who rushing in a tempest from the north,
Great nurse of generous freemen! bravely won
With their own swords their seats, and still possess
 them
By the same noble tenure, are not us'd
To hear such language—If I now desist,
Then brand me for a coward, deem me villain!
A traitor to the public! by this conduct

Deceiv'd, betray'd, insulted, tyranniz'd.
 Mine is a common cause. My arm shall guard,
 Mix'd with my own, the rights of each *Sicilian*,
 Of social life, and of mankind in general.
 Ere to thy tyrant rage they fall a prey,
 I shall find means to shake thy tottering throne,
 Which this illegal, this perfidious usage
 Forfeits at once, and crush thee in the ruins!—
Constantia is my queen!

Siff. Lord constable,
 Let us be stedfast in the right; but let us
 Act with cool prudence, and with manly temper,
 As well as manly firmness. True, I own,
 Th' indignities you suffer are so high,
 As might even justify what now you threaten.
 But if, my lord, we can prevent the woes,
 The cruel horrors of intestine war,
 Yet hold untouch'd our liberties and laws;
 O let us, rais'd above the turbid sphere
 Of little selfish passions, nobly do it!
 Nor to our hot intemperate pride pour out
 A dire libation of *Sicilian* blood.
 'Tis godlike magnanimity, to keep,
 When most provok'd, our reason calm and clear,
 And execute her will, from a strong sense
 Of what is right, without the vulgar aid
 Of heat and passion, which, tho' honest, bear us
 Often too far. Remember that my house
 Protects my daughter still; and ere I saw her
 Thus ravish'd from us by the arm of power,
 This hand should act the *Roman* father's part.
 Fear not; be temperate; all will yet be well.
 I know the king. At first his passions burst
 Quick as the light'ning's flash: but in his breast
 Honour and justice dwell.—Trust me, to reason
 He will return.

Os. He will!—By heavens, he shall!—
 You know the king!—I wish, my lord *Siffredi*,
 That you had deign'd to tell me all you knew—
 And would you have me wait, with duteous patience,
 Till he return to reason? Ye just powers!
 When he has planted on our necks his foot,

And

And trod us into slaves ; when his vain pride
 Is cloy'd with our submission ; if, at last,
 He finds his arm too weak to shake the frame
 Of wide-establish'd order out of joint,
 And overturn all justice ; then, perchance,
 He, in a fit of sickly kind repentance,
 May make a merit to return to reason.
 No, no, my lord ! — There is a nobler way,
 To teach the blind oppressive *Fury* reason :
 Oft has the lustre of avenging steel
 Unseal'd her stupid eyes — The sword is reason !

S C E N E VI.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND, RODOLPHO, *with guards.*

Rod. My lord high-constable of *Sicily*,
 In the king's name, and by his special order,
 I here arrest you prisoner of state.

Osm. What king ? I know no king of *Sicily* —
 Unless he be the husband of *Constantia*.

Rod. Then know him now — Behold his royal orders
 To bear you to the castle of *Palermo*.

Siff. Let the big torrent foam its madness off.
 Submit, my lord — No castle long can hold
 Our wrongs — This, more than friendship or alliance,
 Confirms me thine ; this binds me to thy fortunes,
 By the strong tie of common injury,
 Which nothing can dissolve — I grieve, *Rodolpho*,
 To see the reign in such unhappy fort
 Begin.

Osm. The reign ! the usurpation call it !
 This meteor-king may blaze a while, but soon
 Must spend his idle terrors — Sir, lead on —
 Farewel, my lord — More than my life and fortune,
 Remember well, is in your hands — my honour !

Siff. Our honour is the same. My son, farewel —
 We shall not long be parted. — On these eyes
 Sleep shall not shed his balm, till I behold thee
 Restor'd to freedom, or partake thy bonds.

Even noble courage is not void of blame,
 Till nobler patience sanctifies its flame.

End of the Fourth Act.

ACT V. SCENE I.

SIFREDI *alone.*

THE prospect lows around. I found the king,
 Tho' calm'd a little, with subsiding tempest,
 As suits his generous nature, yet in love
 Abated nought, most ardent in his purpose;
 Inexorably fix'd, whate'er the risque,
 To claim my daughter, and dissolve this marriage—
 I have embark'd, upon a perilous sea,
 A mighty treasure. Here the rapid youth,
 Th' impetuous passions of a lover-king
 Check my bold course; and there the jealous pride,
 Th' impatient honour of a haughty lord
 Of the first rank, in interest and dependants
 Near equal to the king, forbid retreat.
 My honour too, the same unchang'd conviction,
 That these my measures were, and still remain
 Of absolute necessity, to save
 The land from civil fury, urge me on.
 But how proceed? I only faster rush
 Upon the desperate evils I would shun.
 Whate'er the motive be, deceit, I fear,
 And harsh unnatural force are not the means
 Of public welfare or of private bliss——
 Bear witness, Heaven! Thou mind-inspecting eye!
 My breast is pure. I have prefer'd my duty,
 The good and safety of my fellow-subjects,
 To all those views that fire the selfish race
 Of men, and mix them in eternal broils.

Enter an Officer belonging to SIFREDI.

Off. My lord, a man of noble port, his face
 Wrap'd in disguise, is earnest for admission.

Siff. Go, bid him enter.

[*Officer goes out.*]

Ha! wrap'd in disguise!

And at this late unseasonable hour!

When o'er the world tremendous midnight reigns,
 By the dire gloom of raging tempest doubled.——

SCENE

S C E N E II.

SIFFREDI, OSMOND, *discovering himself.*

Siff. What! ha! earl *Osmond*, you?—Welcome,
once more,

To this glad roof!—But why in this disguise?
Would I could hope the king exceeds his promise!
I have his faith, soon as to-morrow's sun,
Shall gild *Sicilia's* cliffs, you shall be free.—
Has some good angel turn'd his heart to justice?

Os. It is not by the favour of count *Tancred*
That I am here. As much I scorn his favour,
As I defy his tyranny and threats——
Our friend *Goffredo*, who commands the castle,
On my parole, ere dawn to render back
My person, has permitted me this freedom.
Know then; the faithless outrage of to day,
By him committed whom you call the king,
Has rous'd *Constantia's* court. Our friends, the friends
Of virtue, justice, and of public faith,
Ripe for revolt, are in high ferment all.
This, this, they say, exceeds whate'er deform'd
The miserable days we saw beneath
William the bad. This saps the solid base,
At once of government and private life;
This shameless imposition on the faith,
The majesty of senates, this leud insult,
This violation of the rights of men.
Added to these, his ignominious treatment
Of her th' illustrious offspring of our kings,
Sicilia's hope, and now our royal mistress.
You know, my lord, how grossly these infringe
The late king's will; which orders, if count *Tancred*
Make not *Constantia* partner of his throne,
That he be quite excluded the succession,
And she to *Henry* given, king of the *Romans*,
The potent emperor *Barbarossa's* son,
Who seeks with earnest instance her alliance.
I thence of you, as guardian of the laws,
As guardian of this Will to you entrusted,
Desire, nay more, demand, your instant aid,

To

To see it put in vigorous execution.

Siff. You cannot doubt, my lord, of my concurrence.

Who more than I have labour'd this great point?

'Tis my own plan. And, if I drop it now,

I should be justly branded with the shame

Of rash advice or despicable weakness.

But let us not precipitate the matter.

Constantia's friends are numerous and strong ;

Yet *Tancred's*, trust me, are of equal force.

E'er since the secret of his birth was known,

The people all are in a tumult hurl'd

Of boundless joy, to hear there lives a prince

Of mighty *Guiscard's* line. Numbers, besides,

Of powerful barons, who at heart had pined,

To see the reign of their renown'd forefathers,

Won by immortal deeds of matchless valour,

Pass from the gallant *Normans* to the *Suevi*,

Will, with a kind of rage, espouse his cause——

'Tis so, my lord—be not by passion blinded——

'Tis surely so——O if our prating virtue

Dwells not in words alone——O let us join,

My generous *Osmond*, to avert these woes,

And yet sustain our tottering *Norman* kingdom?

Osmond. But how, *Siffredi*? how?—If by soft means

We can maintain our rights, and save our country,

May his unnatural blood first stain the sword,

Who with unpitying fury first shall draw it!

Siff. I have a thought—The glorious work be thine.

But it requires an awful flight of virtue,

Above the passions of the vulgar breast,

And thence from thee I hope it, noble *Osmond*—

Suppose my daughter, to her God devoted,

Were plac'd within some convent's sacred verge,

Beneath the dread protection, of the altar——

Osmond. Ere then, by heavens! I would devoutly shave

My holy scalp, turn whining monk myself,

And pray incessant for the tyrant's safety!——

What! How! because an insolent invader,

A sacrilegious tyrant, in contempt

Of all those noblest rights, which to maintain

Is man's peculiar pride, demands my wife;

That I shall thus betray the common cause

Of human kind, and tamely yield her up,
 Even in the manner you propose—O then
 I were supremely vile! degraded! shamed!
 The scorn of manhood! and abhor'd of honour!

Siff. There is, my lord, an honour, the calm child
 Of reason, of humanity and mercy,
 Superior far to this punctilious demon,
 That singly minds itself, and oft embroils
 With proud barbarian niceties the world!

Ofm. My lord, my lord!—I cannot brook your
 prudence——

It holds a pulse unequal to my blood——
 Unblemish'd honour is the flower of virtue!
 The vivifying soul! and he who slights it
 Will leave the other dull and lifeless dross.

Siff. No more——you are too warm.

Ofm. You are too cool,

Siff. Too cool, my lord? I were indeed too cool,
 Not to resent this language, and to tell thee——
 I wish earl *Osmond* were as cool as I
 To his own selfish bliss—ay, and as warm
 To that of others—But of this no more——
 My daughter is thy wife—I gave her to thee,
 And will against all force maintain her thine.
 But think not I will catch thy headlong passions,
 Whirl'd in a blaze of madness o'er the land;
 Or, till the last extremity compel me,
 Risque the dire means of war—The king to-morrow
 Will set you free; and, if by gentle means
 He does not yield my daughter to your arms,
 And wed *Constantia*, as the Will requires,
 Why then expect me on the side of justice——
 Let that suffice.

Ofm. It does—Forgive my heat.
 My rankled mind, by injuries inflam'd,
 May be too prompt to take and give offence.

Siff. 'Tis pass'd—Your wrongs, I own, may well
 transport

The wisest mind—But henceforth, noble *Osmond*,
 Do me more justice, honour more my truth,
 Nor mark me with an eye of squint suspicion—
 These jars apart—You may repose your soul

On my firm faith and unremitting friendship,
Of that I sure have given exalted proof,
And the next sun we see shall prove it further—
Return, my son, and from your friend *Goffredo*
Release your word. There try, by soft repose,
To calm your breast.

Os. Bid the vext ocean sleep,
Swept by the pinions of the raging north——
But your frail age, by care and toil exhausted,
Demands the balm of all-repairing rest.

Siff. Soon as to-morrow's dawn shall streak the skies,
I, with my friends in solemn state assembled,
Will to the palace, and demand your freedom.
Then by calm reason, or by higher means,
The king shall quit his claim, and in the face
Of *Sicily*, my daughter shall be yours.
Farewel.

Os. My lord, good night.

S C E N E I I I.

OSMOND *alone.* [*After a long pause.*]

I like him not——

Yes—I have mighty matter of suspicion.
'Tis plain—I see it lurking in his breast,
He has a foolish fondness for this king——
My honour is not safe, while here my wife
Remains—Who knows but he this very night
May bear her to some convent, as he mention'd—
The king too—tho' I smother'd up my rage,
I mark'd it well——will set me free to-morrow.
Why not to-night? He has some dark design—
By heavens! he has—I am abus'd most grossly;
Made the vile tool of this old statesman's schemes;
Marry'd to one—ay, and he knew it—one
Who loves young *Tancred*! Hence her swooning, tears,
And all her soft distress, when she disgrac'd me
By basely giving her perfidious hand
Without her heart—Hell and perdition! this,
This is the perfidy!—This is the fell,
The keen, envenom'd, exquisite disgrace!
Which to a man of honour even exceeds

The

The falshood of the person—But I now
 Will rouse me from the poor tame lethargy,
 By my believing fondness cast upon me.
 I will not wait his crawling timid motions,
 Perhaps to blind me meant, which he to-morrow
 Has promis'd to pursue. No! ere his eyes
 Shall open on to-morrow's orient beam,
 I will convince him that earl *Osmond* never
 Was form'd to be his dupe—I know full well
 Th' important weight and danger of the deed :
 But to a man, whom greater dangers press,
 Driven to the brink of infamy and horror,
 Rashness itself, and utter desperation,
 Are the best prudence—I will bear her off
 This night, and lodge her in a place of safety.
 I have a trusty band that waits not far.
 Hence! let me lose no time—One rapid moment
 Should ardent form, at once, and execute
 A bold design—'Tis fix'd—'Tis done!—Yes, then,
 When I have seiz'd the prize of love and honour,
 And with a friend secur'd her; to the castle
 I will repair, and claim *Goffredo's* promise
 To rise with all his garrison—my friends
 With brave impatience wait. The mine is laid,
 And only wants my kindling touch to spring.

S C E N E IV.

SIGISMUNDA's Apartment.

SIGISMUNDA, LAURA.

Laur. Heavens! 'tis a fearful night!*Sigis.* Ah! the black rageOf midnight tempest, or th' assuring smiles
 Of radiant morn, are equal all to me.Nought now has charms or terrors to my breast,
 The feat of stupid woe!—Leave me, my *Laura*.

Kind rest, perhaps, may hush my woes a little—

Oh for that quiet sleep that knows no morning!

'Laur. Madam, indeed I know not how to go.Indulge my fondness—Let me watch a while
 By your sad bed, till these dread hours shall pass.*Sigis.*

Sigif. Alas! what is the toil of elements,
This idle perturbation of the sky,
To what I feel within!—Oh that the fires
Of pitying heaven would point their fury here!
Good night, my dearest *Laura*!

Laur. Oh I know not
What this oppression means—but 'tis with pain,
With tears, I can persuade myself to leave you—
Well then—Good night, my dearest *Sigismunda*!

S C E N E V.

SIGISMUNDA.

And am I then alone?—The most undone,
Most wretched being now beneath the cope
Of this affrighting gloom that wraps the world!—
I said I did not fear—Ah me! I feel
A shivering horror, run thro' all my powers!
O I am nought but tumult, fears and weakness!
And yet how idle fear, when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever!—O thou gentle scene
[*Looking towards her bed.*]

Of sweet repose, where by th' oblivious draught
Of each sad toilsome day, to peace restor'd
Unhappy mortals lose their woes a-while,
Thou hast no peace for me!—What shall I do?
How pass this dreadful night, so big with terror?—
Here, with the midnight shades, here will I sit,
[*Sitting down.*]

A prey to dire despair, and ceaseless weep
The hours away—Bless me!—I heard a noise—
[*Starting up.*]
No---I mistook—Nothing but silence reigns
And awful midnight round---Again!---O heavens!
My lord the king!

S C E N E VI.

TANCRED, SIGISMUNDA.

Tanc. Be not alarm'd, my love!

Sigif. My royal lord! why at this midnight hour,
How came you hither?

Tanc.

Tanc. By that secret way
My love contriv'd, when we, in happier days,
Us'd to devote these hours, so much in vain,
To vows of love and everlasting friendship.

Sigif. Why will you thus persist to add new stings
To her distress, who never can be thine?
O fly me! fly? You know——

Tanc. I know too much.
O how I could reproach thee, *Sigismunda*!
Pour out my injur'd soul in just complaints!
But now the time permits not, these swift moments---
I told thee how thy father's artifice
Forc'd me to seem perfidious in thine eyes.
Ah, fatal blindness! not to have observ'd
The mingled pangs of rage and love that shook me;
When, by my cruel public situation
Compell'd, I only feign'd consent, to gain
A little time, and more secure thee mine.
E'er since---A dreadful interval of care!——
My thoughts have been employ'd, not without hope,
How to defeat *Siffredi's* barbarous purpose.
But thy credulity has ruin'd all,
Thy rash, thy wild—I know not what to name it—
Oh it has prov'd the giddy hopes of man
To be delusion all, and sickening folly!

Sigif. Ah, generous *Tancred*! ah thy truth destroys
me!

Yes, yes, 'tis I, 'tis I alone am false!
My hasty rage, join'd to my tame submission,
More than the most exalted filial duty
Could e'er demand, has dash'd our cup of fate
With bitterness unequal'd—But, alas!
What are thy woes to mine?—to mine! just heaven!--
Now is thy turn of vengeance—hate, renounce me!
O leave me to the fate I well deserve,
To sink in hopeless misery!—at least,
Try to forget the worthless *Sigismunda*!

Tanc. Forget thee!—No! Thou art my soul itself!
I have no thought, no hope, no wish, but thee!
Even this repented injury, the fears,
That rouse me all to madness, at the thought
Of losing thee, the whole collected pains.

Of my full heart, serve but to make thee dearer!
 Ah, how forget thee!—Much must be forgot,
 Ere *Tancred* can forget his *Sigismunda*!

Sigif. But you, my lord, must make that great effort.

Tanc. Can *Sigismunda* make it?

Sigif. Ah! I know not

With what success——But all that feeble woman,
 And love-entangled reason can perform,
 I, to the utmost, will exert to do it.

Tanc. Fear not—'Tis done!—If thou canst form the
 thought,

Success is sure—I am forgot already!

Sigif. Ah, *Tancred*! —But, my lord, respect me more.
 Think who I am—What can you now propose?

Tanc. To claim the plighted vows which heaven has
 heard,

To vindicate the rights of holy love,
 By faith and honour bound, to which compar'd
 These empty forms, which have ensnar'd thy hand,
 Are impious guile, abuse, and profanation——
 Nay, as a king, whose high prerogative
 By this unlicens'd marriage is affronted,
 To bid the laws themselves pronounce it void.

Sigif. Honour, my lord, is much too proud to catch
 At every slender twig of nice distinctions.

These for th' unfeeling vulgar may do well:

But those, whose souls are by the nicer rule

Of virtuous delicacy nobly sway'd,

Stand at another bar than that of laws.

Then cease to urge me—Since I am not born

To that exalted fate to be your queen——

Or, yet a dearer name—to be your wife!——

I am the wife of an illustrious lord

Of your own princely blood; and what I am,

I will with proper dignity remain.

Retire, my royal lord—There is no means

To cure the wounds this fatal day has given.

We meet no more!

Tanc. Oh barbarous *Sigismunda*!

And canst thou talk thus steadily? thus treat me

With such un pitying, unrelenting rigor?

Poor is the love, that rather than give up

A little pride, a little formal pride,
 The breath of vanity, can bear to see
 The man, whose heart was once so dear to thine,
 By many a tender vow so mix'd together,
 A prey to anguish, fury and distraction!—
 Thou canst not surely make me such a wretch,
 Thou canst not, *Sigismunda*! Yet relent,
 O save us yet!—*Rodolpho*, with my guards,
 Waits in the garden—Let us seize the moments
 We ne'er may have again—With more than power
 I will assert thee mine, with fairest honour.
 The world shall even approve; each honest bosom
 Swell with a kindred joy to see us happy.

Sigis. The world approve!—What is the world to me?
 The conscious mind is its own awful world.—
 And yet, perhaps, if thou wert not a king,
 I know not, *Tancred*, what I might have done.
 Then, then my conduct, sanctify'd by love,
 Could not be deem'd, by the severest judge,
 The mean effect of interest or ambition.
 But now, not all my partial heart can plead,
 Shall ever shake th' unalterable dictates
 That tyrannize my breast.

Tanc. 'Tis well—No more—
 I yield me to my fate—Yes, yes, inhuman!
 Since thy barbarian heart is steel'd by pride,
 Shut up to love and pity, here behold me
 Cast on the ground, a vile and abject wretch!
 Lost to all cares, all dignities, all duties!
 Here will I grow, breathe out my faithful soul,
 Here, at thy feet—Death, death alone shall part us!

Sigis. Have you then vow'd to drive me to perdition?
 What can I more?—Yes, *Tancred*! once again
 I will forget the dignity my station
 Commands me to sustain—for the last time
 Will tell thee, that, I fear, no ties, no duty,
 Can ever root thee from my hapless bosom.
 O leave me! fly me! were it but in pity!—
 To see what once we tenderly have lov'd,
 Cut off from every hope—cut off for ever!
 Is pain thy generosity should spare me.
 Then rise, my lord; and if you truly love me;

If you respect my honour, nay, my peace,
Retire! for tho' th' emotions of my heart
Can ne'er alarm my virtue; yet, alas!
They tear it so, they pierce it with such anguish—
Oh 'tis too much!—I cannot bear the conflict!

S C E N E V I I .

TANCRED, OSMOND, SIGISMUNDA.

Osm. [*entering.*] Turn, tyrant! turn! and answer
to my honour,

For this thy base unsufferable outrage!

Tanc. Insolent traitor! think not to escape
Thyself my vengeance! [*They fight. Osmond falls.*]

Sigif. Help here! Help!—O heavens!

[*Throwing herself down by him.*]

Alas! my lord, what meant your headlong rage?
That faith, which I, this day, upon the altar
To you devoted, is unblemish'd, pure,
As vestal truth; was resolutely yours,
Beyond the power of aught on earth to shake it.

Osm. Perfidious woman! die!——

[*Shortening his sword, he plunges it into her breast.*]

And to the grave

Attend a husband, yet but half aveng'd!

Tanc. O horror! horror! execrable villain!

Osm. And, tyrant! thou!—Thou shalt not o'er my
tomb

Exult—'Tis well!—'Tis great!—I die content.—[*Dies.*]

S C E N E V I I I .

TANCRED, SIFFREDI, RODOLPHO, SIGISMUNDA,
LAURA.

Tanc. [*Throwing himself down by Sigismunda.*]

Quick! here! bring aid!—All in *Palermo* bring
Whose skill can save her!—Ah! that gentle bosom
Pours fast the streams of life.

Sigif. All aid is vain,

I feel the powerful hand of death upon me——

But, oh! it sheds a sweetness thro' my fate,
That I am thine again; and, without blame,

May in my *Tancred's* arms resign my soul!

Tanc. Oh, death is in that voice! so gently mild,
So sadly sweet, as mixes even with mine
The tears of hovering angels!—Mine again!—
And is it thus the cruel fates have join'd us?
Are these the horrid nuptials they prepare
For love like ours? Is virtue thus rewarded?
Let not my impious rage accuse just heaven!
Thou, *Tancred!* thou! hast murder'd *Sigismunda!*
That furious man was but the tool of fate,
I, I the cause!—But I will do thee justice
On this deaf heart! that to thy tender wisdom
Refus'd an ear—Yes, death shall soon unite us!

Sigis. Live, live, my *Tancred!*—Let my death suffice
To expiate all that may have been amiss.
May it appease the fates, avert their fury
From thy propitious reign! Mean-time, of me
And of thy glory mindful, live, I charge thee,
To guard our friends, and make thy people happy—
[*Observing Siffredi fixt in astonishment and grief.*]
My father!—Oh! how shall I lift my eyes
To thee, my sinking father!

Siff. Awful heaven!

I am chastis'd!—My dearest child!—

Sigis. Where am I?

A fearful darkness closes all around—
My friends! we needs must part—I must obey
Th' imperious call—Farewel, my *Laura!* cherish
My poor afflicted father's age—*Rodolpho,*
Now is the time to watch th' unhappy king,
With all the care and tenderness of friendship—
Oh my dear father! bow'd beneath the weight
Of age and grief—the victim even of virtue,
Receive my last adieu!—Where art thou, *Tancred?*
Give me thy hand—But ah! it cannot save me
From the dire king of terrors, whose cold power
Creeps o'er my heart—Oh!

Tanc. How these pangs distract me;
O lift thy gracious eyes!—Thou leav'st me then!
Thou leav'st me, *Sigismunda!*

Sigis. Yet a moment—

I had, my *Tancred,* something more to say—

Yes

Yes—but thy love and tenderness for me
 Sure makes it needless—Harbour no repentment
 Against my father ; venerate his zeal,
 That acted from a principle of goodness,
 From faithful love to thee—Live and maintain
 My innocence imbalm'd, with holiest care
 Preserve my spotless memory !—I die—
 ETERNAL MERCY take my trembling soul !
 Oh! 'tis the only sting of death to part
 From these we love—from thee--farewel, my *Tancred!*
[Dies.]

Tanc. Thus then !

[Flying to his sword is held by Rodolpho.]

Rod. Hold ! hold ! my lord!—Have you forgot
 Your *Sigismunda's* last request already ?

Tanc. Off ! set me free ! Think not to bind me down,
 With barbarous friendship, to the rack of life !
 What hand can shut the thousand, thousand gates,
 Which death still opens to the woes of mortals ?—
 I shall find means—No power in earth or heaven
 Can force me to endure the hateful light,
 Thus robb'd of all that lent it joy and sweetness !
 Off ! traitors ! off ! or my distracted soul
 Will burst indignant from this jail of nature,
 To where she beckons yonder—No, mild seraph !
 Point not to life—I cannot linger here,
 Cut off from thee, the miserable pity,
 The scorn of human kind !——A trampled king !
 Who let his mean poor-hearted love, one moment,
 To coward prudence stoop ; who made it not
 The first undoubting action of his reign,
 To snatch thee to his throne, and there to shield thee,
 Thy helpless bosom from a ruffian's fury !——
 O shame ! O agony ! O the fell stings
 Of late, of vain repentance !——Ha ! my brain
 Is all on fire ! a wild abyss of thought !——
 Th' infernal world discloses ! See ! behold him !
 Lo ! with fierce smiles he shakes the bloody steel,
 And mocks my feeble tears---Hence ! quickly ! hence !
 Spurn his vile carcass ! give it to the dogs !
 Expose it to the winds and screaming ravens !
 Or hurl it down that fiery steep to hell,

There

There with his soul to tofs in flames for ever!——
 Ah, impotence of rage!---What am I?---Where?
 Sad, fient, all?——The forms of dumb despair,
 Around some mournful tomb!---What do I fee?
 'This foft abode of innocence and love
 Turn'd to the houfe of death! a place of horror!---
 Ah! that poor corfe! pale! pale! deform'd with
 murder?

Is that my *Sigismunda*!

[Throwing himfelf down by her.]

SIFFREDI.

[After a pathetic pause, looking on the fcene before him.]

Have I liv'd

To thefe enfeebled years, by heaven referv'd,
 To be a dreadful monument of juftice?——
Rodolpho, raife the king, and bear him hence
 From this diftrafting fcene of blood and death.
 Alas! I dare not give him my affiftance;
 My care would only more enflame his rage.

Behold the fatal work of my dark hand,
 That by rude force the paffions would command,
 That ruthlefs fought to root them from the breaft;
 They may be rul'd, but will not be oppreft.
 Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature ftay,
 And the great ties of focial life betray;
 Ne'er with your children act a tyrant's part:
 'Tis yours to guide, not violate the heart.
 Ye vainly wife, who o'er mankind prelide,
 Behold my righteous woes, and drop your pride!
 Keep virtue's fimple path before your eyes,
 Nor think from evil good can ever rife.

T H E E N D.



